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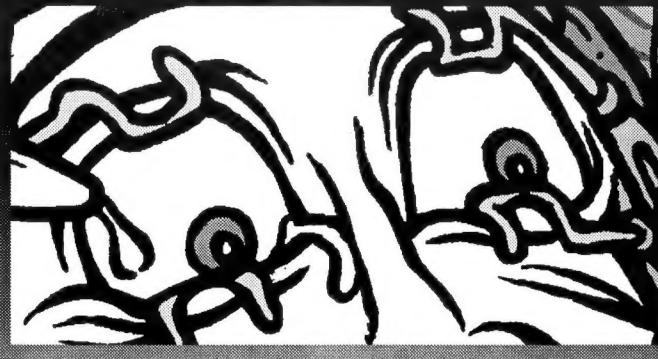
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Brutarian

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The love issue

FEATURES

The Pretty Things by John Oliver

Illo by Chris Krolczyk

Former naughty boys of rock talk
To former naughty boy of northern
VA. Is there a future in their
comeback?

Franco Dragone by J. Rentially

Illos by Chris Krolczyk, Martin
Schneebalg, and Danny Hellman

Photos by Al Seib and Takashi Seida
Mother of Mercy! Has Brutarian
sold out in a last ditch effort
to achieve respectability?

Stan Lee by Holly Day

Illo by King Geo

The Man, the Myth, the Legend.
Verily, He doth bestride the
world like a colossus.

FICTION

Trailer Trash Savior by Tom Gerencer

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Saving the world from Arma-
ggeddon sure doesn't pay well.

COLUMNS

On Manor's Mind

Audio Depravation

Brutarian Library

Six Pack Theater

COMICS

Mark Poutenis, S.W. Taggart,

Bruno Nadlin and John Ryan

ARTISTS—

-King Geo - He's almost humaaaaaaaan! He's
almost a ma-a-yan!!!!!! Almost humaaaaaaaan!
.... fuck, if *Love Gun* ain't the best album

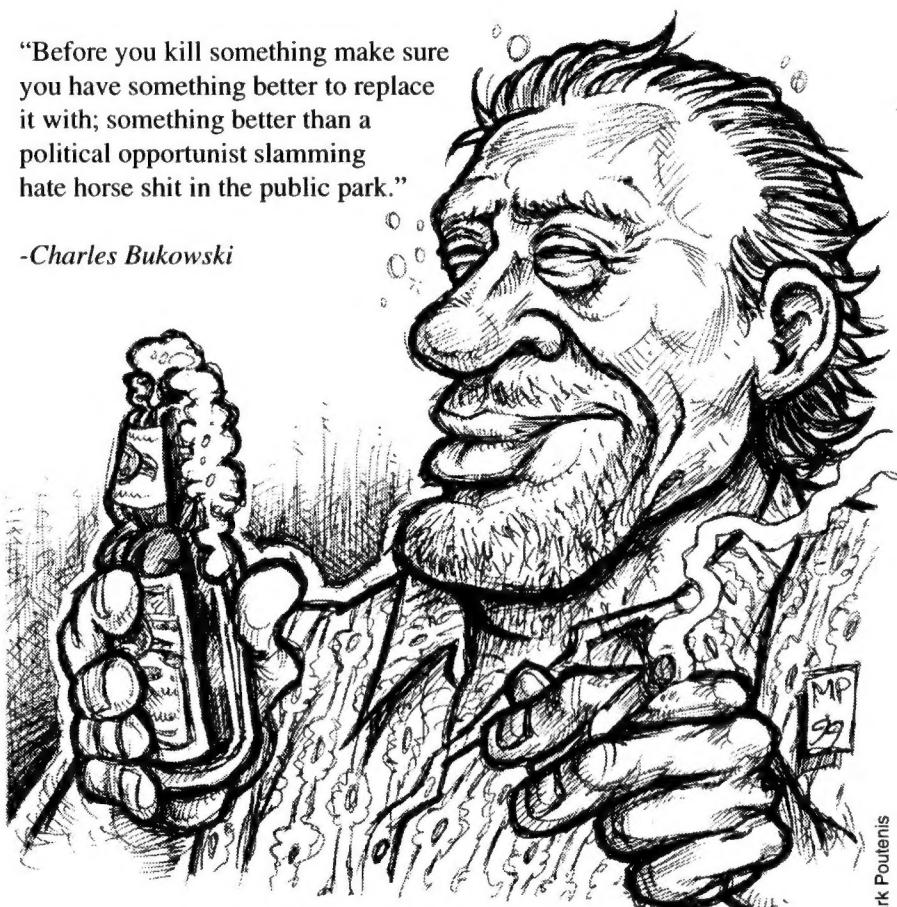
-Danny Hellman - A clown bein' sued for a

million bucks!?!? Who'da thunk it?

-Mark Poutenis - By the time you read this, I
had better have won \$200 on the Tennessee
Titans from my brother in law. Rams suck.

"Before you kill something make sure
you have something better to replace
it with; something better than a
political opportunist slamming
hate horse shit in the public park."

-Charles Bukowski



Mark Poutenis

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Editor/Mr. Happy Ass: dom salemi Art Directors: mark poutenis (likes "Marvin & Wendy"), Jenna Kimberlin (digs "The Wonder Twins")

Has failed us for the last time: danny hellman

Saving Grace: Opie & Anthony doing Mike Tyson, Animal Planet's "Emergency Vets", Jimmy Johnson & Dan Marino's utter failure and humiliation

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America:

It was funny the first time. Joy and I were having dinner and the waiter asked if I wanted fresh ground pepper. We all had a good laugh. It was kinda cute when Kathie Lee asked me if I thought Cody's Christopher Walken impression was funny. Heck, I even chuckled when my doctor asked me if it hurt when he had his finger up my ass during my colon test. But so help me Christ, if one more slack-jawed motherfucker asks me "Is that your *final* answer?" I swear I'll rip off their arms and beat them to death with them. Bank on that you fucking douche bags.

Your Pal Regis,
Naked in the back of a Brink's truck

All you wonderful Americans:

Boy, for a democracy there sure ain't a whole lot of freedom here. Ya'know, I DO have a freakin' dad, a room full of toys, a half-brother, a bike and all kinds of friends back in Cuba, but what the fuck do I know? I'm just a raft kid . . . I guess it is in my best interest to live out my life with some drunken, smelly great uncle I never met.

Little Elian Gonzalez
getting a hummer from Mickey Mouse
Disneyworld

P.S. - For a Sega Dreamcast I'd kill the pope himself

Hello Everyone,

I am a very sick little boy and my mother is typing this for me because I can't. Mommy is always sad because I was born without a body. Don't cry mommy. Don't be sad. The doctors gave me a pretend body - a burlap sack filled with leaves. I would like to have a body transplant but the doctors

said we need more money. Please send us money before my leaves rot and the burlap mildews. I want my mommy to stop crying and I want to be happy. I want a puppy but I guess that doesn't even matter now because I can't even hold a puppy. Please send us money so that I can hold a puppy.

Thank you,
Billy "Smiley" Evans
The boy with just a head
(And a burlap sack for a body)

Gentlemen,

It has come to my attention that the antics on Smackdown are causing the youth of this great nation irreparable harm. Therefore, as a first step in addressing this matter I have notified my staff that when referring to women, "whores" not "hoes" is the appropriate spelling.

Vincent J. McMahon
Misogyny, CT

Gentlemen,

How many times do I have to tell you this: The hospital fucked up! We thought we were getting Bing Crosby's semen, not David Crosby's.

Melissa Etheridge
Luscious Lips, Ont

Gentlemen,

Alright, maybe I didn't invent the Internet. That was just a pile of horseshit, I admit it. But I am reinventing myself as a man and just let me tell you something, that for someone born without a spine that's no mean feat.

Al Gore
Menschville, TN

My Children

Look, I don't mind that Al Sharpton claims to speak for me even though no one can understand a word he's saying. Nor do I mind that no one knows where he was ordained or what denomination he represents. But somebody best tell the good Rev that if he refers to Me as "homeless" just one more time I'm going to get big time righteous on his ass.

You Know Who
Heaven

Gentlemen,

Remember when I said that the Millenium was approaching and with it, the end of days? And that those of you who did not repent before this would abide in Hell for evermore while being subject to incredible tortures. And that while these torments were to be of terrible intensity there would be no release because the novel and unceasing variety of each pain would take fire from the other so as to re-endow that which has kindled it with a still fiercer flame? Remember? . . . Well, never mind.

Pat Robertson
Demagogue, VA

Yo,

Man, them anger management courses I was ordered to take really taught me some solid values. Like how to hold up and smash a motherfucker across the jaw with a champagne bottle rather than just flyin' off the handle and deployin' my cell phone. Shit get broken that way. Props to the judge for givin' me some hard time at the community service center.

Sean "Puffy" Combs
Yellowbelly, NJ

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN MISUNDERSTOOD? ISN'T IT TRUE THAT NO ONE IN YOUR LIFE HAS EVER REALLY KNOWN YOU? DON'T YOU WISH YOU COULD FIND SOMEONE TO RELATE TO? SOME OTHER 'MISFIT' TO HELP YOU EASE THE PAIN? WELL, THEN, I HAVE NO FUCKING IDEA WHY YOU'RE READING THIS, 'COZ UNLIKE MOST OF YOU WHINY LOSERS, I HAD A

PERFECT CHILDHOOD!

I REALLY OWE IT ALL TO MY PARENTS! SINCE I CAN REMEMBER, THEY'VE BEEN ENTIRELY SUPPORTIVE OF MY CREATIVITY & EXUBERANCE!



REALIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF NURTURING MY MANY TALENTS, THEY ENROLLED ME IN THE MOST PROGRESSIVE & UPSCALE SCHOOLS!



OF COURSE THEY ALWAYS MADE TIME FOR GOOD OL' FAMILY FUN!



YES, THANKS TO MY PARENTS' LOVE & GUIDANCE I'M THE HAPPY, FULFILLED PERSON THAT I AM TODAY!





As a longtime (approx. 35 years) fan and follower of The Pretty Things, I was hoping against hope that they'd bring their late Summer '99 tour somewhere near me - Washington or Baltimore or Richmond would do. Imagine my surprise upon hearing they would be playing Jaxx in Springfield, Virginia, about 6 miles up I-95 from my house! While Jaxx as a venue didn't really make much sense, as the club usually caters to more of a biker/white trash 70's sort of music crowd (Molly Hatchett, Foghat, Rick Derringer, etc.), nonetheless I was stoked....even more so when the brilliant Mister Salemi informed me, through the Pretties' record company, that they would talk with us. (The same Mister Salemi who blew off this chance-of-a-lifetime interview opportunity in order to play host at Casa Brutarian to the DeLaHoya/Trinidad title fight on pay-per-view party that night...but that is another story....). Within a week of the scheduled show, it was cancelled and re-scheduled for a brand new club in Washington, DC, The Garage (formerly The Roxy and, I believe, several other names over the past 20 or so years), a smaller venue than Jaxx.

The Pretties' '99 tour coincided with the release of their first new studio album in over a decade, "Rage Before Beauty", as well as the continuing reissue of their backlog of older LP's on the Snapper label, and five of their earliest EP's on Norton Records. In previous issues of BRUTARIAN, I've reviewed "Rage..." and the first four reissued Snapper LPs/CDs. Needless to say, I consider most of their recorded output as must-have. The band has gone through many incarnations from 1964 through the present, along with various side-trip projects (Fallen Angels,

Metropolis, Dick Taylor and Phil May playing in The PrettyThings-Yardbirds Blues Band and British Invasion All-Stars, Dick Taylor playing with The Mekons, Andre Williams, and others....), and practically all live shows and recorded output (around 25 CD's that I have) from these guys have been top-shelf quality. In an alternative universe, this band could have been as successful as the Rolling Stones (for whom Dick T. was the original bassist).....and in THIS universe, they definitely deserve a lot more success than they've garnered. But on to the interview!

INTRODUCTION - To set the scene, we're in the back of the tour bus with Phil May (vocals) and Dick Taylor (guitar) of the Pretty Things, parked outside The Garage in Washinton, DC. It's September 18, 1999, and they're going to play this new club (opened last week) later tonight. The tour bus reminds me of the British movie "Still Crazy" (which Phil and Dick have not seen), about the fictitious 70's UK band Strange Fruit, only this bus is nicer. I'm with my friend Miss Kim, who's never heard any of the Pretty Things' music (a bit too young). I appreciated her coming along and keeping me company, and her persistence in finally getting us on the tour bus. (As sometimes happens in these interview situations, the band was nowhere to be found when we were scheduled to interview them. About a half hour later, they showed up.)

BRUTARIAN - I've gone through a bunch of your fairly recent interviews, and I'm going to try to come up with some questions that haven't been covered yet....there won't be any of this (in old lady's voice) - "So, Dick, tell us, do you regret leaving the Rolling Stones before they struck it big? Think of all the money you would have made!"

Dick Taylor - Yeah, yeah, yeah..... or another one I hear, "think of all the women you could

have had!"

BRUT - Which brings me to my first question - about the groupies....do you guys still get plenty of groupies following you around on these tours? Phil May - Yeah....absolutely! (Dick nodding in agreement)

BRUT - Young ones?

PM - Yeah, we also get some mature ladies, but we get all ages. There's been a very wide range of people in the audiences at our shows this tour - we get 18-19 year-olds, as well as the older ladies and blokes with moustaches who appear to be our age!

BRUT - This is what, the 3rd or 4th date from the end on this tour?

PM - Yes, we have 3 more dates after tonight.

BRUT - How has the current tour been so far?

PM - Brilliant! It's gone quite well.....

DT - It's really been great fun...

BRUT - What size clubs have you been playing? I think this one (Garage) holds maybe about 300-400 people.

DT - We've played all different sizes of clubs this time.....mostly about this size, though.

BRUT - I saw you guys at Cave Stomp last year in New York, at Coney Island High.....they can fit around 300 people in there, but crammed around 700-800 in there that night, it seemed.

PM - Yeah, we heard that place went out of business shortly after that. They seemed to be looking for a reason to close that place down....

BRUT - This year's Cave Stomp, I'm not sure where it's at...someplace in lower West Manhattan, I think. The Monks....you know them, correct?

DT - Yes, we do.

BRUT - They're headlining one night, and the other 2 nights, it's reunited 60's West Coast bands - The Chocolate Watchband and The Standells....

DT - Sounds interesting....

BRUT - I just sent Mike Stax (editor of UGLY THINGS magazine) a videotape copy of the VH-1 program you guys were on, "Where Are They Now?" Have you seen that?

PM - No, we heard about it.....

BRUT - It was a good show, considering they devote about 4-5 minutes to each band. They prefaced your part of the show with a trivia question - "Dick Taylor, the original bass player of the Rolling Stones, quit them to form his own group. Was it (1) Herman's Hermits; (2) The Dave Clark Five; or (3) The Pretty Things?"

DT (laughs) - I bet not many people got it right, though!

BRUT - It was a very, very weird coincidence, I thought, that the opening act booked for the gig you guys were originally gonna play in Springfield, Virginia, was The Fallen Angels (NOTE: NOT the Phil May-fronted band of the same!).

PM - Really? I don't know anything about them...

BRUT - They were a late 60's psychedelic band from the Washington, DC area who put out two albums around '68/'69 that were quite good.....they reunited

last year and put out a new album that, frankly, just isn't very good - it sounds nothing at all like their old stuff.

BRUT - Back to your shows this tour...and the crowd reactions.

PM - Like I said, we've been getting a very wide range of ages in our audiences, both old fans and new fans.

DT - I had one guy come up to me the other night and say "I've been a fan of yours for 8 months now!" And that's good to hear....

BRUT - Me, I have your first album in mono on Fontana...I bought it the week it came out. That's how old I am!





PM - Well, it's good we're also getting the younger people out to our gigs, 'cause....you know, people our age, they're not gonna go hang out too much in a hot sweaty club. They're going to go to some place like The Bumpershoot (ED: ???) And they're gonna bring their kids with them. Places like the Whiskey - they aren't going to be there. It's important that we play the kinds of places that the 18-19 year olds hang out at. Actually, these are the kinds of places that the older fans used to hang out at when they were 18 or 19.

BRUT - This is true.

PM - It's really just a change in clientele, but it's nice to feel that we're actually reaching people who....it's like Dick says - guys who have only come across the Pretty Things in the last 8 months.

DT - When we used to go out and see our heroes when we were younger - we didn't give a shit if they were 60 or if they were 20 - like the older blues people, they were just revered. I think that's how a lot of people feel about us.

BRUT - You'll get no argument from me on that!

PM - Also, we seem to represent an era that has so much magic for so many people in this generation. The books by, what's the guys name?...He wrote "Less Than Zero"...

BRUT - Bret Easton Ellis....the guy who also wrote "American Psycho"

PM - Well, in his books, the kids there seem to

believe that they were born after everything important had already happened...like Woodstock...they were really pissed off that they were born too late. There are so many of these garage songs and young band songs about being born too late. There's definitely this sense that they missed something. Girls come up to us and say "I'm only 31, and I was born too late....I missed all that." So, to some extent, I suppose we carry a bit of that with us.....that we actually are some of the people who made records back in '65 or '66.

BRUT - There seems to be a big resurgence of 60's acts now as well. I picked up a magazine this afternoon - "The Beat Goes On", it's devoted to 60's British acts. I was just in New Orleans recently, and Eric Burdon and the New Animals were playing there at the House of Blues....and I saw in this magazine there's also a version of The Animals playing in the UK - it's Hilton Valentine, Alan Price, John Steel, all the original surviving Animals without Burdon, with a new singer.

DT - Yeah, I've heard that they've gotten back together.

BRUT - That film I was talking about earlier, "Still Crazy"....that was supposedly based on one of the Animals' reunion tours. If that's true, it doesn't paint a very pleasant picture of Eric Burdon, as the singer in that band was quite a self-important, but insecure, prima donna.

PM - Eric's a nice enough guy...we always got on well with him....although he does have a bit of tendency to preach about things....

BRUT - My first night in New Orleans, a block from the House of Blues, I bumped into Bo Diddley, coming out of what appeared to be a rather sleazy-looking strip club.....

DT - Really?

BRUT - He was wearing the cowboy hat with the sheriff's badge, looking just like he did 30 years ago. I immediately asked him "Are you who I think you are?"...and he said ""yeah, probably" (laughs from all).....he was playing there that night. Then, about 4-5 days later, I saw Peter Frampton in a record store down there - I didn't recognize him at all, he's really changed from his 70's look.

DT - He's cut off most of the hair, hasn't he?

BRUT - Yeah, cut it or lost it.....like all of the rest

of us, he's aged.....

(At this point, an interruption, as Phil & Dick are asked about who's on the guest list for the show that night.)

BRUT - I assume you guys are still doing the Reservoir Dogs look on-stage for this tour?

PM - Yes, yes.

BRUT - Or, in the Midwest here, they might think it's The Blues Brothers or maybe Bible salesmen? (ED: or maybe, with porkpie hats, a ska band)

DT - Well, that hasn't happened yet - the Blues Brothers thing has kind of gone away....the suits are lurking behind us (points to cabinet behind where he's sitting).

BRUT - Let's get to the new album - "Rage Before Beauty"...great album!....definitely one of the better ones released this year, in my opinion. The really surprising thing to me is - I already had 4 or so of the songs on it, as I have all your 45's from the past few years....is how unified the album sounds. It sounds like you guys went into a studio and cut all of it within a short period of time.

PM - Well, we were surprised about that ourselves.

You never know how these things are going to sound, even if you make an album in 3 months. You're still not sure that it's going to sound like a whole piece. For a long time, we've tried to make albums that have a theme...that make a statement over the whole record, not just little bits like a patchwork quilt...because I find that kind of distressing. And there was a kind of theme going through the album, that we were probably not conscious of.....and it was very pleasing to hear it altogether and hear how it all fit.

BRUT - I think the album is so well paced.....

PM - We agonized for ages

over the running order of the songs. We kept listening to different running orders before we settled on one.

BRUT - And what was the time span you recorded these songs over? 11 or 12 years, was it?

PM - Actually, there are a couple of tracks on it from 1982...so it was about 17 or 18 years from the first to the last.

BRUT - I've got 2 versions of "Eve of Destruction" 45's - one's a picture disk with you guys in your Reservoir Dogs suits, and the other's from sometime in the mid 80's, you're all standing around an old house or castle or something.....

DT - A dungeon....that's right, we did release that twice...

BRUT - Another thing I'd like to get into that hasn't been widely covered in recent interviews - your side projects over the years, especially the recent ones from the early 90's. I remember just accidentally stumbling across the first Pretty Things/Yardbirds Blues Band CD - the first one you two made in Chicago, with Jim McCarty of



the Yardbirds, Studebaker John, and Canned Heat's bass player. That's a great rocking blues album, with both of you in peak form....it was like- God, this is a great new band!....and the thing got no publicity, very limited distribution...

DT - Well, it was produced by George Paulus, he's a sort of collector of blues albums...

BRUT - George Paulus? He's the one who did the.....

DT - Andre Williams comeback album...

BRUT - Exactly! Andre Williams and the El Dorados....how was that experience, doing that album with Andre?

DT - I loved it! It was really a great experience....I ended up getting on great with Andre. I really like him.

BRUT - I remember reading an interview with him, the first one he had done in about 15 or so years, with LIVING BLUES magazine....he was quite the recluse all that time. Supposedly, he would only grant an interview with PLAYBOY or PENTHOUSE magazine, unless you were willing to pay him something like \$50,000.

DT - He's quite a character. Everybody who ever works with him starts out apprehensive, but ends up loving him.....apart from the sax player....(laughing) he asked him to do one sax solo too often, and the guy just walked.

PM - Did we use him on our (Chicago) stuff?

DT - Yes, he's the guy we used. But he walked from the session with Andre.

BRUT - I just read a recent article on Andre where....he's opening now for quite a few of the wilder bands, a lot of punk bands, but he apparently doesn't know one from the other. In this article, they ask him about the band he's playing with then....they asked him "Andre, what do you think about Nashville Pussy?" And he replies "Well, I like it there, I also like it in Nashville, Knoxville, Detroit, anyplace I can get it!" (Laughs from all) Then, they told him that Nashville Pussy was the band he was opening for! They're the ones who set fire to the stage the night before. "Oh, them!", he said.

DT - I think it's great that he's still out there playing. Good for him!

BRUT - There was also some stuff that you guys did for Mike Ober, who, I believe, now lives just across the river in Arlington, Virginia - the British Invasion All-Stars?

PM - I doubt he'll turn up here!

BRUT - Not on the best of terms with Mike?

PM - Nah, I just think he's a bit of a sleazebag! He swears so much....he's kind of like a car salesman.....you wonder where he's coming from. You tell him "Yeah, I'd like to play with these people, it sounds interesting ", but then you get down to it and....

BRUT - If I recall, you guys played on the second British Invasion All-Stars album (ED NOTE: with Ray Phillips (Nashville Teens), Eddie Phillips (Creation), Jim McCarty (Yardbirds), Don Craine and Keith Grant (Downliners Sect), Mick Green (Pirates), among others..)

DT - We were there for about 10 seconds.

BRUT - Really, that much involvement?.....and you also did that album with Matthew Fisher (Procol Harum) and the Inmates called "A Whiter Shade of Dirty Water", billed as The Pretty Things 'n' Mates, I believe...personally, I really like that album!



DT - Yeah, there's some nice stuff on that.

BRUT - It's basically your tribute to 60's garage/trash music (ED. NOTE: several covers of Sonics' songs, "Pushing Too Hard", "Let's Talk About Girls", "Louie Louie", "Sometimes Good Guys Don't Wear White", etc.)

PM - It was a good idea. We knocked it out in a short time - it was done overnight. When we were doing it, Mike Ober, the "producer", fell asleep. We spent all night assembling this, then staggered out of the studio the next morning.

BRUT - The only place you could get those albums at all in this country was through Mike Ober, via mail order...and he was in the UK at that point. I was kinda shocked to see, from his ad in the last issue of UGLY THINGS, that he's back in the US, living in Arlington, Virginia. He's also selling Eddie Phillips' solo album (ED: Creation's guitarist) and several others.

DT - I think he had a job in England at the time, working for some American company, a bank maybe...and they probably got fed up with him and sent him back!

BRUT - Was he just a super fan with lots of money?

PM - No, he didn't even have a lot of money particularly...he was just very enthusiastic....but then he turned into a car salesman halfway through it. (Dick laughs)

BRUT - He kind of sounds like Rocking Ronnie Weiser, the rockabilly fanatic who rediscovered quite a few old rockabilly artists in the 70's, and recorded them in his living room...

PM - Yeah, he was kind of like that.

DT - One of the good things about all this stuff we did with George Paulus is we met the people from Norton.

BRUT - Billy and Miriam - ah, yes, they just released a bunch of your old EP's, right? Are you selling them on this tour?

DT - Yeah, we'll even cut you a good deal! (laughs)

BRUT - Actually, I have a German CD of yours, called "The EP Collection"but then again, these are vinyl....with the original covers reproduced?

PM - Yes, and the way it's presented is really, really beautiful!

BRUT - Norton is the best at re-issuing old records.

DT - They did an outstanding job on these!

BRUT - What's next on the agenda as far as recording? Have you written enough to go back into the studio for a new album anytime soon?

PM - I think there's quite a lot of sloshing around.

DT - People keep nagging about a live album...

PM - We did the live thing ("Resurrection" - "SF Sorrow" live at Abbey Road from late '98), there were only 10,000 of that issued. That's got to be edited for the video. Also, there are 2 more albums to be remastered for reissue. And we've still got to do "Rage" for Japan and Australia and Europe. So we really won't have any time to work on something new until Spring or Summer, next year. There's really lots of time before we can bring out another one, anyway.

BRUT - I guess we fans shouldn't be so greedy, now that we have you back!

PM - Well, putting out a new album seems like the obvious thing for us to do next, but sometimes, you can just have too much stuff out.

BRUT - What still has to come out, other than "Crosstalk"?

PM - "Freeway Madness" ...

BRUT - That's right, Snapper hasn't put "Freeway Madness" out yet! I have it on CD, but I think it's the Warner Bros/Reprise version.

PM - The Snapper reissue will be just like the others- digitally remastered, with good liner notes.

BRUT - An oft-repeated question that I'll ask anyway.... Viv Prince, your original drummer - what's he doing nowadays? Last I heard, he was in Por-

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PM - Yes, we speak to him, we see him when he comes over for repairs...he fell out of a car last year, and broke his arm and leg and ribs and collarbone, and had a lot to be repaired.....had me visit him in the hospital every day, and he drove me mad.

BRUT - He's still crazy?

PM - Yeah.....

BRUT - All the wild stories about things he did, which I won't go into, all these stories are true?

PM/DT (Both nodding "yes")

BRUT - He set a fire on an airplane, burned up a stage in Australia, getting you guys banned from everywhere.....

PM/DT (Both nodding throughout)

PM - Wel, it wasn't just Viv...it was the whole band...we were.....

BRUT - It was the thing to do back then?

PM - Well, it was more of a reaction to the aggravation we got...it sparked a lot of retaliatory things that we did back then....it wasn't a matter of we were out looking for trouble. We had a lot of pressure on us, and we reacted and we responded.

BRUT - And you were all young back then....

(Interruption for beer break.....)

BRUT - Phil and Dick, you two seem to be the common denominator among all of the different versions of The Pretty Things...even though I remember that Dick was gone in the 70's for 3-4 albums....

PM - I've always been the one that kept the band going, did the album deals, I've been there all the time...and when I left, the rest of the band became Metropolis.

BRUT - And that was when you did the The Fallen Angels gig?

PM - I just wanted to do something, and I told them I just wanted to be the lead singer, and not do anything about the business or have to write anything....and if you want a singer in your band, I'll come along and sing the songs. Because I've had it running a band. So when I showed up, they only knew one song, and I wrote the rest of the album!

BRUT - That album is much more laid back than anything you'd ever done before, at least on record...it's very, what's the term I'm looking for?...Eagles-ish, maybe.

PM - That one song - "Fallen Angel" - that's all they knew. They'd been together 18 months, and that's all they'd managed to learn or create!

DT (to PM) - I went to see your gig.....

PM (to DT) - You were there?

BRUT - They only played one gig?

(At this point, the tape gets somewhat jumbled. Phil and Dick discuss whether Peter Tolson, 70's member of the Pretties, played at the Fallen Angels gig....per Phil, it was Eddie (last name?), who looks like Peter. They both agree that Pete Tolson looks exactly like a certain Irish snooker player of great reknown, whose name I can't pick up...)

BRUT - Is Peter still in music now?

PM - No.

DT - He's working in computers now.

BRUT - Hey, there's big money in that...

BRUT - Question - The band that you have on the road right now....I was somewhat shocked to learn that your initial gig back would be performing "SF Sorrow" live in its entirety...this is without a doubt the most complex album you guys ever made. I

would have guessed that you would have come back doing the old, simpler songs first, then maybe work up to doing "Sorrow". Is it because of this particular version of the band that you chose "Sorrow" as your comeback gig?

DT - Well, we just rehearsed...something that we never used to do.

PM - Also, this current lineup of the band, give or take a member or two, pretty much represents our entire 35 year career. I never liked doing "Parachute" on stage without having Wally around. I wrote it, and it seemed silly doing it with somebody who played bass and sang, but wasn't Wally. I do think there is a kind of point to doing stuff with the original people who made the record.

DT - With this combination, we seem to be able to do things from all the different eras.

BRUT - I remember that from Cave Stomp last year - all 35 years were represented.

DT - We don't have to go "Oh God, now we have to pretend we're somebody else" on any of our songs.

BRUT - Well, let me say this. In an alternative universe, we wouldn't be having this conversation, because you guys would be playing arenas. As far as I'm concerned, you guys are rock & roll Gods, you belong in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame....to the extent that such a ridiculous thing exists in the first place...I think the whole concept is a crock of shit...(laughs from all)

PM - In an interview in Cleveland, I jokingly said "you know we sent our MBE's back...and I saw somebody writing that down!"

BRUT - There are bands that have been inducted in there that accomplished very little, World-wide. Buffalo Springfield, for example, sold few records, had even fewer hits, yet got in because they spawned Neil Young, Steve Stills, and Richie Furay. The Yardbirds, great band that they were, never tore up the sales charts either....but they gave the World all those great guitarists, and had a tremendous influence on R&R music later. I'd think that you guys should be inducted, based just on the tremendous influence you had on the 60's and 70's garage and punk and psychedelic bands.....although I realize that it's all political, a matter of who's palm you grease maybe.....

DT - Well, Jimmy (Page) was inducted there 2 years ago...and what amazes me is that they charge you for everything! It's like "Here's a great honor for you - now you have to pay for the plaques and the tickets to get in the ceremony, and everything else!"

BRUT - God, they charge you to be honored?

DT - Yeah, and it's quite a lot.....and you're also kind of expected to give your guitars to The Hard Rock Cafes...this seems to be related....

BRUT - Have you given The Hard Rock any guitars?

DT - Yeah, and what's funny....I gave one to the London Hard Rock Cafe....and we went there a bit later, and where my guitar had been - there's now



a Harley Davidson displayed there! I don't know where my guitar had gone!

BRUT - I hope you didn't give them anything too valuable!....I have yet to see a real valuable vintage piece like a old 'burst or pre-CBS tele or strat hanging on a wall in one of those restaurants.

DT - I gave them a G&L - a very nice guitar.

BRUT - Yeah, they are nice guitars.....which raises another question - Does the name Perry Margoleuf (sp?) ring a bell?

DT - Yes, he used to play with us.

BRUT - I met him quite a few years ago at Southworth Guitars, just up the road in Bethesda, Maryland. He was a good friend of Gil Southworth, and I remember his mentioning that he was playing off and on with The Pretty Things. He's also a guitar dealer himself...

DT - Yes, Perry is the one who fixed me up with

my current guitar.

BRUT - The black ESP tele?

DT - Yes, that's the one.

BRUT - I take it Perry never recorded with the band?

DT - No, he played with us primarily in Europe. He and I are still friendly.

BRUT - Didn't Mike Stax play bass with your guys on a Midwest tour?

DT - No, Mike played only once with us - when he came over to London for the first time...

BRUT - As part of the Pretty Things/Yardbirds Blues Band?

PM - No, that wasn't the Pretty/Yardbirds band, it was like a pickup band....

DT - It was actually with some of the people in the Headcoats. It was kind of a Pretty Things/Headcoats collaboration.

BRUT - Speaking of guitars, I just read where my old friend Mr. Southworth just paid \$70,000, plus whatever the reserve or commission was, another \$10-11,000, I think, for one of Eric Clapton's old ES-335 Dot Necks at the recent Sotheby's auction in New York. He was quoted as saying he's going to take it out and play it at his Tuesday night blues jams.....knowing him, he'll probably do just that!....or maybe serve potato salad off it at his next party!

DT - Good God!....

BRUT - One last question I have that I just gotta ask.....I read about this in the BIG TAKEOVER interview.....something about Skip Alan (drummer) and his French ex-wife and chickens?

DT/PM - (both laughing) - Oh No!!! (ED. NOTE: In that magazine, they brought up a rumor about Skip's ex-wife wanting to bring chickens to bed with them, to have sex with....and we're talking butchered raw chickens from the market, not live ones (!!!??!!))

DT - You'll have to ask him about THAT one your-

self! I'm afraid you won't get a good reaction.....(Goes to get Skip)

BRUT - Is this story true, or were you guys just taking the piss out of the interviewer?

PM - No, it's a true story.....

BRUT - You do seem to get your share of whacky drummers!

PM - And we've got lots of stories about Skip.....like the time he cast adrift the whole Brittany fishing fleet out to sea....this must have been in '66 or '67. We were on this fishing boat, and wanted to cast off, and Skip managed to untie the wrong rope, and over 20 large boats started drifting out into the harbor....I don't remember exactly how we got back to land...

DT (returning) - No, Skip doesn't want to talk about it.....it's not that he doesn't like the story, it's just that his ex-wife is involved....

PM - I was telling them about Skip and the fishing boats back in '66 or '67.....

DT - Well, you remember our first rehearsal, after John and Wally joined us?....First song, and Skip, midway, through it, crashed right through the drums.....

BRUT - How about a musical question?

DT - Good!

BRUT - What music do you guys listen to nowadays?

PM - For me, mostly classical, some jazz...although I really don't like listening to much while I'm working....it gets in my way.

DT - I live on the Isle of Wight, and we don't have much in the way of radio stations there. When I'm driving home from rehearsals in London, I like tuning in to rap stations, rock stations, just listening to what they're playing now. And when I get home, I like listening to live music whenever I can. I also tend to get dragged into playing with whoever's at the club or the pub.

BRUT - You still have a lot of side projects going on, like The Mekons?

DT - Yes, I've done several albums with them. I was also a Waco Brother just the other week....

BRUT - They're the band that's kind of the all-star conglomeration - a Mekon or two, an ex-Rumour,.....

DT - Yes, they're quite good. Jon Langford's the

Mekon...it's his band...and they also have a really good drummer, I can't remember his name...

BRUT - Are they based in New York, like the Mekons?

DT - No, the Waco Brothers are based in Chicago....the drummer's name is Steve....

BRUT - Steve Goulding? He's Graham Parker & The Rumour's ex-drummer.

DT - Yes, he's very, very good drummer....great for leading you, very instinctive player!

BRUT - Speaking of albums and CD's, you guys now have tons and tons of CD's in most stores now...even the large chains like Tower and Virgin...how are sales of the reissues and new album doing?

PM - Very well - we're really selling a lot of CD's throughout the country.

BRUT - At Cave Stomp last year, they were selling your first 3 reissues, and the first album ("Pretty Things") sold out almost immediately...I'd say within the first half hour after they set up the table there.

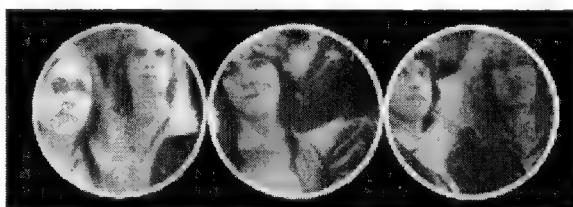
PM - The label has done a tremendous job on the reissues....they've treated the albums with respect. (At this point, someone from the front of the bus tells them they'll need to get ready shortly.)

BRUT - We'll quit bothering you now. Thanks a lot for letting us talk with you. It's been a real pleasure!

DT - You're quite welcome....nice meeting you!

EPILOGUE - On the way out the bus, Dick and I talked about some of the more bizarre magazines we have reviewed in the past in BRUTARIAN - "Hair To Stay" (he's heard of); "Equus Eroticis" (hasn't); and "Splosh" (hasn't). Later that night, The Pretty Things put on a solid show, covering all of their 35 years, before an appreciative crowd of less than 200....but considerably more than their manager Mark St. John's estimate of "22". It was pretty much the same set they played from Cave Stomp '98, with some interesting additions - "Singapore Silk Torpedo", "Vivian Prince" and several others from the "Rage Before Beauty". In addition to the EP reissues, they were also selling a brand new single, "All Light Up", at the show. The new single, an ode to smoking dope, is a 60's-ish breath of psychedelia, with shades of "Straw

berry Fields Forever" and "Another Brick In The Wall", and could be a hit for them, except for (1) the subject matter, and (2) today's radio programming. Well done, Pretties!



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On Manor's mind....



by Stately
Wayne Manor

It must be tragic not knowing me personally. There you are, slouching through each day, murmuring "How can I endure this excruciating wait between publication dates without any sage words from Stately Wayne? Where can I turn?"

Well, thanks to a Scottish webmaster named Mr. Magoo, you can bop over to SWMSWM—Stately Wayne Manor's Site To Worship Me—at <http://tnm7.com/SWM>. There, you'll find not only a large O-M-M archive, but also a sizable collection of my movie and wrestling columns, various bonuses and the must-read Manorfesto, winner of the 1999 Most Compelling Document In Cyberspace award.

As you're reading past O-M-Ms, you will eventually come to a bittersweet realization: Those periodic in-depth rants dedicated to a single subject (e.g. revisionist punk history) are fascinating beyond belief, but they leave no room for the Extraordinary Insight section. Actually, I always have a batch of the latter "stored up"; it's just that space limitations sometimes force me to shelve the Insight and/or squish the Hubba Honey segments. In fact, last issue's inarguable explanation of femaledom created one such instance.

Well, before I sell out and sign on with a mag that pays a lot more but wouldn't *dare* let me use this material, I'm going to compensate for your EI jones by skipping a main theme rot cheer and letting lose a load of Insights from my notebook. Granted, one or two may not be as timely as they once were, but they're *still...well*, Extraordinary.

EXTRAORDINARY INSIGHT: Of all the valuable lessons to be learned from those VH-1 documentaries, one stands out most prominently: Has-been rockers apparently all patronize the same Dollar Store to buy the cutrate squid ink they use for hair dye....When someone says a drink "tastes like horse piss" (or something similar), I can't help but wonder how they know....Of the multiple millions who drunkenly sing the sentimental song each January 1st, I'm willing to bet there are about three of them who have even the most *remote* idea what the phrase "for Auld Lang Syne" actually means. "May old acquaintance be forgot"—yeah, that's a really sound strategy—and fine grammar, too....Idiotic False Rumor To Foist On The More Gullible: In foreign lands where the locals don't speak English, McDonald's uses just initials to ID their specialty sandwiches. Thus, in Hungary a Big Mac is known as a B.M....Sad: Kia ran a year-end spot asking what Japanese fear more than—quick cut to a giant reptile destroying a city. The thing is, the creature



shown was Gorgo, and *that* monster is mashing ENGLAND!...Sadder: If you are having trouble with a Uniden cordless telephone, the pamphlet provides a remarkably helpful *phone number!* Drrrrr....Saddest: On the weekend a report came out claiming kids aren't getting enough education out of their televiwing, one of the Big Three networks—in addition to running a graphic reading "Schools In" minus the apostrophe after "School"—labeled the world's most famous athlete "Michael JORDON"!!! Worse yet, the latter was a rain delay time-filler taped the previous summer—meaning they had a full year to correct this boner but did nothing.... Experimenting with different drugs, I've been shooting up Midol every day—but I only get off once a month. Been snorting aspirin, too. No buzz but I haven't had a noseache in ages!...Wouldn't the Woodstock finale have been infinitely more glorious if the trucks were left alone and the *crowd* set on fire? (I love the smell of napalm on a moron.)...Buick has a car called the LeSabre. What, are we supposed to think it's French?...Lest you doubted my earlier assertion he's a shameless suck-up to major studios, Rolling Stones' Peter Travers' late November review of the then-new 007 pic contained the quote "Bond has his mojo back. Yeah, baby." On top of the pure awfulness of those lines and other obvi-

ous sins, it just so happened to miraculously coincide with the timing of the Austin Powers video release. Wow, that's kissing two butts with one Stone. (Aside to Mike Meyers: No one but you finds your butt fascinating.)...If I write "I am very proud to state I have never used the word 'paradigm' in a sentence," does that mean I then have and therefore cannot write the preceding?...Shilling a collection of asinine "power ballads" by Poison and their ilk, the voiceover tells us, "They taught us how to love. They taught us how to live." If that's the case, no *wonder* we're so screwed up....Oh, yeah, I believe a PC tech tosses your old part when he performs an upgrade, not installs it in someone else's computer and charges them for the "new" part. Uh-huh, no problem....This just in from the Salvation Army store: "We want the hat back, Drudge."...According to a BMG flier, some dope wrote "(Marilyn Manson's) Mechanical Animals is the 90s Electric Ladyland." And they wonder why nobody with sense takes these things seriously....I'm awfully curious as to how zine people who fervently claim to be 100 percent full-blown misanthropes can also be half of a couple and throw parties....From The "Who's The Ho Here?" Files: Condemning a hardcore porn starlet—whose scenes are seen by a few thousand—as "a degraded whore," Generic, Dime-A-Dozen "Serious Actress" A struts onto the set where she will perform nude simulated oral sex beamed to tens of millions of HBO viewers—including all the guys Dad will see at work the next day....Doesn't one beat another *down* rather than *up*?...Among the top tragi-comedies of '99 was a piece of fluff informing us the "100 Greatest Women of _Rock And Roll_" included such noted hot-and-heavy R'n'R wenches as Dionne Warwick, Roberta Flack, Lena Horne, Olivia Newton John, Natalie Cole, Tammy Wynette, Dolly Parton and f'n Babs Streisand! What, no Julie Andrews?!?...It's REAL simple: Never trust a white man with dreadlocks....A steer is, by definition, a castrated bull—which really makes me wonder what went into the burgers at the old Steer Inn chain....Studies show that every hour, someone in America says "It takes one to know one"—without ever giving so much as a single thought to



the fact it may very well be the most asinine thoroughly unfounded expression in the English language. Go ahead, try to think of one more flat-out untrue...." If *I* can do it, *anyone* can." How much does THAT say about the speaker's self-esteem?...I've got an incredibly original idea: interview a music biz personality for a documentary and have him not seated in a studio by the sound board!

HUBBA HUBBA HONEYS: As if we needed further evidence the average Joe has no taste, homely, overrated Gwyneth Paltrow and the Karen Carpenter clone from *Friends* who married into the crazy Arquette clan have had their mugs pasted onto every other magazine cover in the country, while vavavoom Virginia Madsen labors in relative anonymity in far-below-her fodder like *Candyman* and made-for-TV features.

Besides the deelishoso curve collection, Virginia has those tottering-on-the-verge-of-tears eyes chivalrous Stately is *always* a sucker for. More impressive, however, is the fact she not only held her own with a naked Jennifer Connelly in JenCon's heyday, but she did so while making a *Don Johnson* film (*The Hot Spot*) bearable! For that feat alone, she should be enshrined in several Halls Of Fame!!!

Frankly, I'm getting quite fed-up with Hubba Hubba selections not touching off a firestorm of "You're absolutely right, sir" letters and pro-Honey rallies in major cities. I'm not *suggesting* Uschi Digart, Francine York, Yvonne Craig et al receive their long-overdue adulation, I'm DEMANDING it, damn it.

To further 'inspire' the proper veneration of Virginia, I've given her bro *Michael Madsen* your home address; and if you don't immediately begin displaying the appropriate appreciation for his sizzling sibling, Mr. Blonde's gonna drop by and do something r-e-a-l-l-y unpleasant to your ear. That's right—he's going to read aloud from his book of poetry. Don't say I didn't warn you.



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FRANCO DRAGONE

WRITER/DIRECTOR OF CIRQUE DU SOLEIL SPEAKS

by J. Rentilly

A headless giant enters a barren room, a stardust umbrella and a moonswept trenchcoat his only protection. A man howls at the heavens, slamming together his fists above his head, answered by god's own lightning. A woman emerges from the womblike cocoon of red silks, floating high above the earth, struggling to be born and born again. Two brothers move in dreamlike cadence, flowing and hefting one another in preternatural, physiology-defying formations. A ghost ship of steel emerges from a foggy neverland, its passengers dressed in bleeding red, anxious to disembark, then reboard the craft, pirouetting spirits full of ambivalence and wanderlust. A man studies the headlines, unaware that his entire existence is slowly being consumed by flames; when he has finished with the news, he nonchalantly collects his paper, his chair, and wanders into darkness, completely engulfed in fire.

Part Magritte, part *Jeunet y Caro*, part *Dario Fo*, madness, satire, romance, and dream, the work of Franco Dragone and the internationally-renowned Cirque du Soleil, for whom he has been the primary creative mind through 10 shows over 14 years, is striking, embracing, visually sumptuous, while touching the spirit as only deep dreams can. One emerges from a Cirque du Soleil show moved to the core, intangibly, speechlessly, less by the eyepopping visuals, the astonishing displays of physical agility, the spellbinding acrobatics, than by the overwhelming melancholy, wrapped in a promise of solidarity and human kindness. Through one-of-a-kind theatics and a kind of nonlinear performance art, which mixes theatre, dance, music, circus, and dreamstuff — “a seamless ballet of intuition,” according to longtime Cirque Chorographer Debra Brown — Cirque du Soleil promises that no matter who you are, you can be loved, you can belong, your voice matters and is heard at

some distant corner of the galaxy.

“Franco feels that while the world is becoming more and more crowded, that individuals are losing their identities,” says Lyn Heward, Creation Vice-President at Cirque du Soleil. “What he hopes to do with his work is to give back to the nameless souls, their lost identities.” “When life is tough, tenderness is a solution for Franco,” says Cirque’s longtime costume designer, Dominique Lemieux. “He cares so much about the world around him. He always knows everything that’s going on around the world. Even when we’re in the middle of a big show, he lives inside his TV. He’ll know every detail about what’s happening in the world.”

With such mysterioso titles as *Mystere*, *La Nouba*, *Quidam*, *O*, and *Saltimbanco*, the 47-year old Dragone’s Cirque du Soleil productions are certain to entrance an audience. As subject matter, the shows take on nothing less than the eternal, the





metaphysical, the universal. *Mystere*, Dragone says, is "the story of the universe." *Quidam* is about "our frailties and our anguish in the face of the new millennium," while *Alegria* seeks to convey the twin themes of nostalgia and fallen governments. Recently, Dragone took his well-honed stage skills to the medium of cinema, directing and co-writing a 7 million dollar film adaptation of *Alegria*, one of his favorite Cirque shows, starring Frank Langella, due for international release this Spring. (It will be released in the U.S. on video, a compromise for the auteur, who was faced with schedule cuts, meddling financiers, and the presumed narrative necessities of the medium. Nevertheless, Dragone is preparing another film, an experimental return to his political-action roots, called *Bucharest Station*, which will combine provocative clowning with a documentary-like take on Romanian youth struggling with collapsed families, drug abuse, and HIV. If such subject matter seems counter to the ethereal offerings of Cirque du Soleil, Dragone is quick to remind, "Cirque is magnificent, but it is nothing without the life outside the big top. I cannot do Cirque without the life, or it is meaningless." Dragone and Cirque du Soleil now have no less than four permanent shows in the United States: *O* and *Mystere* in Las Vegas,

Nevada (at the Bellagio and Treasure Island, respectively), *La Nouba* at Disney World in Orlando, Florida, and *Alegria* at Beau Rivage in Biloxi, Mississippi. Several other Cirque shows, including *Saltimbanco* and *Quidam*, are still traveling the world. This reporter caught up with Dragone at the Nortel Palm Springs Film Festival where he was world premiering the film version of *Alegria*, then again in Belgium where Dragone was taking a brief hiatus before beginning work on his new film. In conversation, Dragone was thoughtful, searching, self-deprecating, and eager to be understood, a gentleman and a gentle man, impassioned and provocative.

Q: What made *Alegria* so ripe for filming?

A: Everything started because I did not like the videotaped versions of my shows. And I wanted to do a film. But I wanted to do a little, small film. I wanted to have a little crew - one camera, traveling with the live show and me during one year. But, you know, in the movie business everything is complicated. When you have something little, it has to become something more 'important.' I wanted to film *Alegria* because it was a show I loved very much, a show where I put a lot inside, a lot of tenderness for my kids. I wanted a tender

show. Which I did. In the medium that is the Cirque, you cannot always tell everything. You have to work in images. I wanted to try this experience in film. Which I did.

Q: Tell me what you mean: 'tenderness for your kids.'

A: Working as I work, I had no time to grow my kids. Also, I wanted to make a kind of statement with the film. We are living in a very tough world. I think now kids have a very tough time with all that's going on around them. It's a world of action. A world of hard times. I wanted to take the opposite track. Can I give to a teenager? Can I interest a teenager with something other than action? Can I interest a teenager with a piece of tenderness? Actually, my kid who is 17 now - and you know what a teenager is - he is living a tough time. Things are hard in school. Very violent. I wanted to try to speak to my son with something other than action, tenderness. I was very touched - maybe because he is my son - but he was touched with this approach. So were his friends. Really, myself, I am very rough. Very critical about things. Very tough sometimes because of my political past. But I really wanted to see if it's possible to speak with people in tenderness.

Q: Have you done it with the film?

A: Actually? Before I screened the film on the big screen, I hated film. I hated it. But then screening it, looking at, I began to like it a little. If I have succeeded at something, I think I've learned things here. If I have succeeded, it is at this piece of tenderness. I did not really concentrate on the story so much. I wanted to know if it's possible to touch people with the images. And I think now it has touched me. And I think it's touched the few people who have seen the film. You don't walk out with emptiness. I think you feel a sense of consolation. I think we need this. (pause) But it's a very little film. I don't want to be pretentious.

Q: The live shows from Cirque du Soleil have nearly subliminal narratives. That doesn't work in film. Or does it?

A: You say, 'subliminal.' It's subliminal, but it's not betraying the audience. Each of us, we have memories. I think we have a common memory of the world which we don't express, but we have it. I think what I tried to do with the film, what I try to do with the shows, is tap your common memory. To talk to you not through your cultural differences, but through what you really are in the world that you have. I just tried to touch the people from their basic emotions.

Q: Are we talking about the collective subconscious and Jung?

A: For me, it is the collective symbolism. It's not an accident that one fairy tale goes all around the world - even if you change a few words or characters. It's the same. No matter which civilization. One fairy tale moves around the world. I'm not a believer. I don't believe in god. I do believe that we have a collective subconscious. It's the only thing we can use to feel and recognize the people. It's the one thing that we share. If we don't have this?

Q: It lends a tremendous spirituality to the performances?

A: Yes. Absolutely. I don't do shows because I want to do shows. I do a show because I want to share an experience with people. In the theatre, we share maybe a very nice moment together. There is nothing more to believe in today. The only thing I can still believe in today is you, her, the other, us. The basic human being. I have no more idea what the world has to be. But I know I at least have to share this world of the theatre with other people.

Q: That, of course, makes you something of an anomaly, as a filmmaker at least. The differences between a theatre troupe and filmmaking executives are many.

A: Yes. Very different. Also, because it was my





first movie, I had a lot of people around me who 'knew' everything about movies and told me how to do the movie. It was a very sad thing to me. The movie that you will see is really the compromise between my fight, the way I see the show, how I make an image 'talk' and what has to be in a movie, with the narrative, the rules? Of course, cinema is a medium with its own rules. The narrative. I am a big fan of well-written stories. Absolutely. I love them. But it's not the only way to do movies. It can be done another way. In movies, everyone's and the same language. This is the most difficult thing. From the packaging of the movie through the editing, I had a lot of people who 'knew.' I knew nothing, I guess. I just tried to understand?

Q: So much of the live Cirque shows seem to be timeless. You mentioned the subconscious, the universal stories. With a live show, once the tent goes down, it's over. It's dark. With film? You know, it lasts. What made you really want to jump into the film industry?

A: Before you do a film, you say that you do it

because it will allow you to fix something that will last forever? I hate to go to my shows. Because it's so tense. Everytime you go? It's a live show. Sometimes it can go right. Sometimes it goes wrong. (laugh) In the theatre, a live show depends on the audience. And it can change every second. With film, you think you have more control. With all your wishes. You think you can really fix it. It's not true. Absolutely not true. Because until the last moment, you have to deal with distributors, producers, with a lot of people. You know, in a live show, if something isn't working, I send clowns into the audience. With film, I haven't figured out how to do that yet. (laughs)

Q: You shot quickly. This was a fairly short schedule, wasn't it?

A: I never realized it was short, but I always knew it was short. They cut four days of shooting. A lot of page's something I learned, too. Cutting pages to a script, it may be easy for a producer. But, for me, it is a lot of meaning to cut one word. Now I realize it was very short. The first time I say, 'Action!', I am dealing with 200 kids. Second time,

it's 1500 kids! (laugh) It was short. But it was a great experience. I learned? I learned how to live with people. Childhood, Introduction to Theatre, the Politics of America.

Q: You mentioned the children in *Alegria*. There's usually a sense of a child leaving or being forced out of his or her own home onto some sort of journey. I know that you left your home in Cairano, Italy with your family at a very young age to La Louviere, Belgium, and how this might relate to what you do in your shows.

A: Yes. You're right. Very early I had to take the train. I am part of the people who are the Diaspora. The people. The immigration. Work is work, you know. I was part of these people who migrate because of, uh, food, need. We say the place we come from exports its misery. My parents moved so they could have a chance to earn their lives. To raise their kids. So I was little, going back and forth. When I was so young, I saw my father go away and I remember he would come back every year or two years. I have to say, though, I'm not thinking too much about this. It happened. It's over. Also, I never cast a young kid to play me, to play that role. It's because we have a young kid, so I put him in the story. For me, the passing of the time, the nostalgia, the missing of the people... All these things go by and I realize I am more now, how do you say, tragicomic. There's as much comedy as tragedy. The smile is always close to the tears. I don't know.

Q: What did your father do?

A: My father was a mine worker. Belgium is the country of the mine. Then he worked in a factory the rest of his life. A subway manufacturer, a steel worker.

Q: Nobody in your family was in theatre. How did you fall into it?

A: Nobody was in the theatre, but I was 9-years old and already playing the accordion everywhere and my father turning the pages of the music, you know. It was at school that I met teachers and people around me where I grew up who had the interest. It was a very high period. A lot of things were going on. After '68 in France, in Belgium, too, people wanted to shake the world. I com theatre-makers wanted to go out of the theatres. They go into the streets and the factories. I thought to

myself, 'I like this.' I salute them. Slowly and slowly, I am in the theatre. I like this. And I kept going.

Q: So you worked with the traditional theatre, but left it to begin working with the street performers.

A: Yes. Because it was against tradition. The worst thing I think we've invented is theatre school. They format you. I want out of this world. So I work with theatre. Street theatre. Not circus, but theatre. Cirque comes from street performers.

Q: What were some of the things you were doing?

A: I was doing political plays. In the streets. Totally different than Cirque. I didn't even like circus at the time. I used some circus techniques to appeal to people about politics. High wire. Acrobats. It was always a play about something. A strike. Theatre workshops in jail. Plays with junkies. I learned how to direct the actors. The non-actors. You have to give them the action that will help them to mean something. It's not telling them to 'think this,' 'think that.' Motivation. Nothing about Actors' Studio. It's totally action. In stage, it is like this. Your expression doesn't depend on your wish. It depends on what you do. You can do this - I do this very often - you can explain to the people? I will tell one guy to come from over there and somebody behind you wants to kill you. Then to the other guy, I tell him 'you run very fast, then jump high, and fall on the floor.' Then I ask the audience, 'Which is the most dead?' Usually, the one with the action - not the one who knew what he was doing - was most dead. (laughs)

Q: Your work, sometimes clearly and sometimes more subtly, has a political subtext. How would you describe your politics?

A: I am to the left. (pause) When I was younger, I



was very close to people who wanted to change the world. And then, you realize the people who want to change the world are killing people, too. I refuse to jail myself in one ideology. It more clear and strong with an injustice right in front of me. And they are everywhere. There are 300,000 people without homes in Italy alone. It is not so much about political ideologies now, but about classes. I am touched by the less beautiful, the less tall, the less intelligent, the less rich. This is where I come from. I began life in a suitcase. It can be no other way for me.

Q: A few months ago, I talked to Film Director Terry Gilliam. He says he cannot stand America, that America has kind of dissolved its own history. You've spent enough time in America, I think. Is America's sense of history or culture kind of damaged, do you think?

A: For me, I like America. It is in America that I have had the opportunity to do a show like *O*. It's a little tough to talk about America and Americans... The problem that I have with my relations and my job in America is the plot. Do you understand 'plot'?

Q: Tell me more...

A: The plot of the story is a kind of... you know when you walk in the snow and you leave a trace, your footprints? For me, the plot is a footprint the character leaves behind. The problem I have with America is they cannot read between the words, behind the words. They want everything to be told. It's difficult to accept the studio pushing for the same story. I mean, there are a lot of really good actors and artists, but it's always the same. They only change the costumes, the period, and sometimes the voice of the actors. It's always the same. And there is no love in this. It's what bothers me the most. So when Terry Gilliam says he has problems with America, I can understand this. But... It's so... In Italy, we say it is the country of contradiction. You can have a Communist guy going to the church on Sunday. In America, it's the country of the extreme possibility. You can have everything. You can have a very Puritan life and people focusing on 'Be careful. You cannot smoke.' Then on tv you can see Jerry Springer. It's fantastic. It's strange. I don't want to be the European who comes

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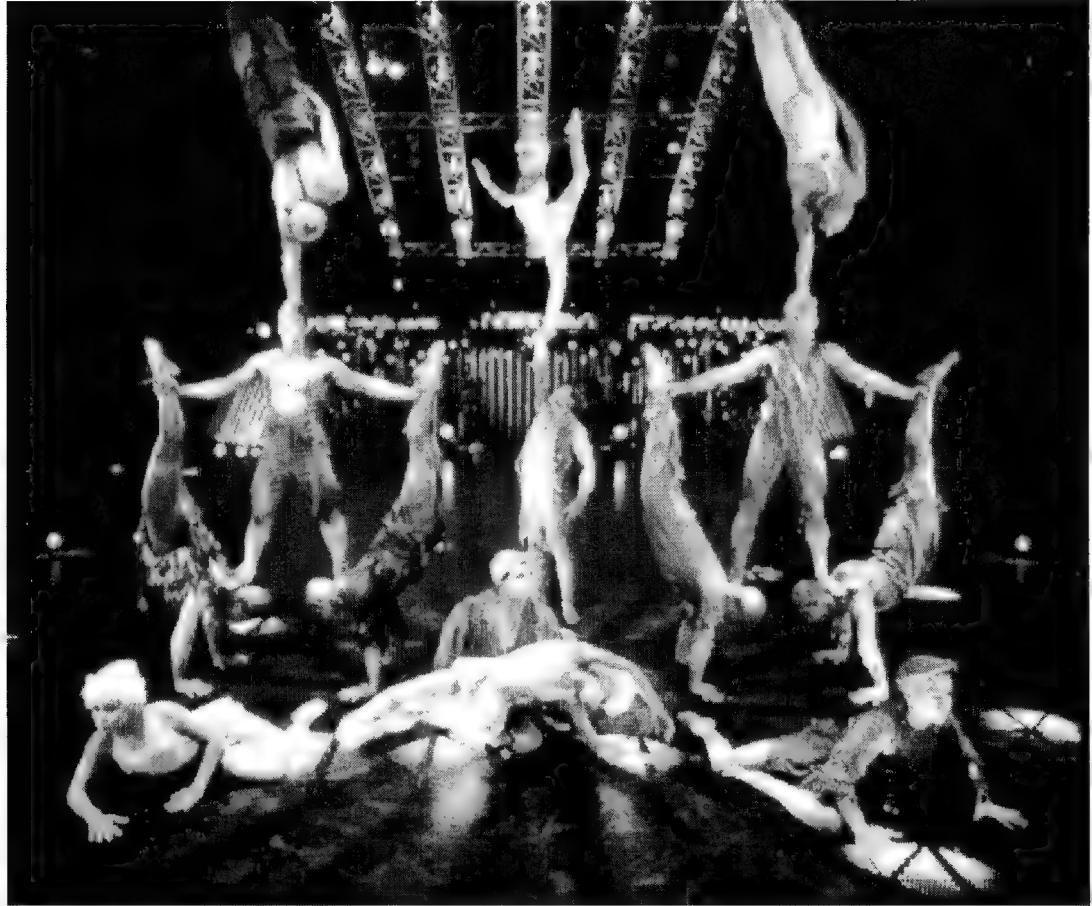
to America or to Canada and says, 'Oh, they don't feel the history.' In Europe, we feel the history on each corner of the street. Yes. It's true. A lot of that is a question of space. In America, there is so much room to do everything in expansion. In Europe, we have to do everything small, close together.

Q: It's a strange sensation going to Las Vegas, and amidst all the neon and chaos, finding Cirque du Soleil.

A: Yes. Yeah. But I think Las Vegas has a bad reputation. I feel Las Vegas has aspi there, I cried. There is a feeling of aspiration, wishing for something. It's to wish, to hope. I feel this. Because of this, they work for it. For taste. In the beginning, Cirque du Soleil was asking, 'Why should we go there?' But I don't know where else we could have done a show like *O*. For me, Las Vegas is the transcendence of the kitsch. So it's quite beautiful. I compare it sometimes to Orlando. Orlando, I'm sorry, it's a city of the charter. Of course, they work for the family, the family values. The family community. The family wallet. It was a kind of lowering of the tastes that I saw. The potential tastes of the people in the name of family values. It's why you can find a lot of restaurants, but not any good restaurants. It might be good for the family, but I don't think it's good for the mind of the family. It's not good. The standards are too low. I don't understand.

Q: Speaking of families... You've said that the Cirque is for everyone. But with these permanent shows especially, tickets have gotten to a price where not everybody can afford to go.

A: It's a contradiction, yes? For me, and for everyone in Cirque. With *O*, the ticket price is not because of the budget but because I wanted to do the most expensive show on the Strip. It's kind of chic, you know? Now I'm sure people have gone to see *O* and not liked it. But they can say they saw *O*, and say they paid \$100. People like to do that. But on the other side, we have to ask our own consciences about the money. We want a lot of people to come, to be able to come. Even in the traveling show in our own big top, some people cannot afford to come. As businesspeople, this comes up all the time. There is always debate about the price

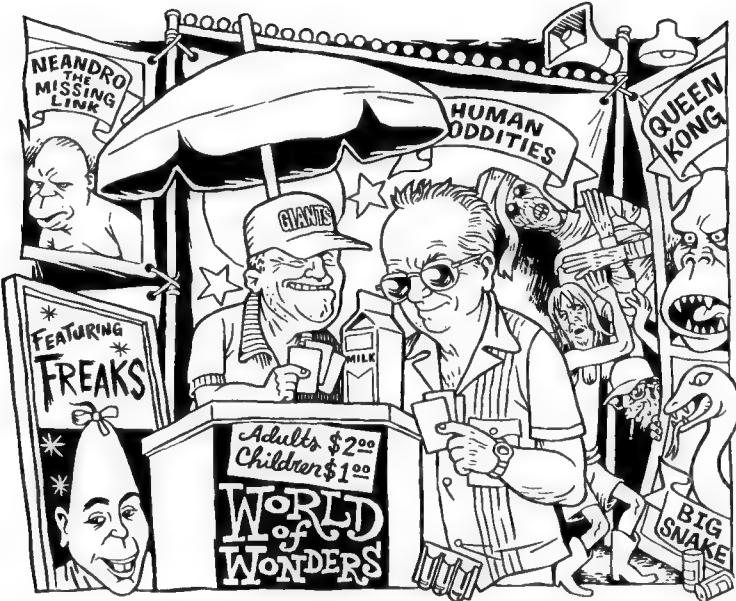


of the tickets. To compensate, Cirque does free shows. A certain amount of Cirque profits are also redistributed around the world to different organizations. I know how much Cirque does to participate, to offer action, to reach out with the tools that we have, but this will always be a conflict or a contradiction for us. You know, there is the old saying. I'm trying to remember. 'Ten pennies for the theatre. Three pennies for the bread.' We have to push. So we do free shows. If you go to the Excalibur to see the medieval show, it doesn't cost you very much. You can see some fighting and eat chicken at the same time. Right?

Q: Right. Cirque du Soleil certainly offers a show unlike anything else in the theatre today. Tell me how a Cirque show comes together.

A: Well, for example, we know we have to deliver a new Cirque du Soleil show in April 2000, that it will have to deal with circus acts or circus techniques because this is what they expect. So we have to think about what kind of techniques we want to explore - what we have done before, what we want to do not to repeat ourselves. This is inevitable.

Something that we have to deal with. Then I don't think anymore at all about the technique. I only think about what kind of emotional feelings or problems or themes I want to deal with - things that are going on inside of me. My concerns. Not in doing a show, but in living. What are the themes or subjects that are interesting me? From there, I start talking with the other creators - to Michel, Dominique, Gilles. Many of us work very closely in the beginning. Dominique, she will design. Not costumes, but visualizations of the intuition that I have. She will draw and paint - a lot, a lot, a lot - before I choose the kind of characters that will go in the show. She is the one who takes the ideas from my mind and puts them on paper, puts them into that medium. Very often, she disobeys. She doesn't give me back what I asked. She gives the meeting between my imaginary and her imaginary, and something happens. I love it when they disobey. Michael does the same thing with the stage. So it goes back and forth like this. We have a visual for the show: colors, a set, a kind of character. Very often, what this does is give to me a kind of



toy that I can play with. Michel gives me this stage, this toy. He knows that I will shake the stage. I will turn it, shake it. The artists come in a little bit later. The conception is not yet finished. In Montreal, we do workshop with our artists - theatre, staging, teaching them a little about moving onstage, and such - depending on the themes that I want to explore. Sometimes, like with *La Nouba*, we work a lot on dance. I wanted to see all kinds of hip-hop dance. Because I cut it to pieces and put parts of it where they belong. Sometimes I'll ask to see the tango. I will never use the tango onstage, but it will give the performers a- they are all gymnasts, you know - they will learn the feel of the tango. We have a common vocabulary then. For one character, I had him learn karate. Because in karate, in the martial arts, you have a kind of choreography. When you ask somebody to learn something - to dance, or sing, or karate - you give them a challenge and you see their inner ability, their vulnerability. The vulnerability is the door I go in to work with the artist and to build a character that is not something we project on them, but that comes from inside of them. Sometimes they don't understand what they do. It's beautiful. Then Dominique

comes to Workshop. We put all the drawings on the wall. We have to distribute the costumes to the artists. I told her, in the beginning, 'I don't care about fabric or tissues, I want to see the soul of the character.' Dominique designs the characters, not just costumes. The artists will sometimes recognize themselves in the characters. So we do Workshop. There are two kinds of Workshop - the formation, which lasts six months. The performers learn technique, gymnastics, how to put it into an act. Put the highwire into the trapeze. We learn dance, acting. The acts come together. Every four weeks, I go and work on certain acts with [choreographer] Debra, while she supervises the movements. I go and see where they are, give direction, stretching it out or cutting it down, guiding it to my intuition. In *Quidam*, for example, I had a rule that there could be no big smiles. I wanted something that would be more dark. Then we start a full-time Workshop together. The performers work with me. All the artists are together. It's an important moment. It's there that we really create the troupe. I shape the artists. We finalize the kind of vocabulary we will use in the show. What kind of movements. What kind of gestures. How to walk. After a few weeks, or so, we go into the big-top or the theatre, and we put all these different ingredients together. This is when I start to decide. To do the editing. I always create the images. A lot of rushes. Then I have to slowly by slowly do editing. Eventually, you see what you see onstage.

Q: I talked with John Gilkey (ringmaster of *Quidam*) last week. He said that working with you was 'entirely liberating and entirely scary at the same time.' What do you think?

A: Well, it depends who you are. With John, I had the same relationship that I did with other artists who are doing, you know, actress in *La Nouba* told me it was frightening to work with me because of the freedom. She said, 'I would like you to tell me what to do.' Well, you have to move. It's different for people who are primarily dancers or gymnasts. With someone like John, though, it would be stupid for me not to use his talents as an actor. I'm pushing him. Show me this. I see things, sometimes, that are too obvious. I cut them. Let's look behind this. What can you do beyond this. It's

frightening for a lot of performers, but it's what I used to say to actors. 'When a theatre asks you something, you have to learn to disobey.' If I ask you to cry, the minimum you can do to disobey is to make me laugh. If I ask you to laugh, you must make me cry.' That's part of the creation of theatre. Its creation is onstage. Am I to say, 'Move left to right, then right to left, then go three steps?' No. Doing a show is not that. It is my job to push the creativity of the actor.

Q: I've heard that you begin a show with a single word or an image. How does that happen? How do the shows come to life for you?

A: It's a long process, actually. Once I have an image? This is Peter Brooks, you know? It starts with an obscure intuition, an obscure presentiment. It starts with this. This will lead you all the way along the process. This will help you recognize, to know 'this is for the show,' 'this is not for the show.' Of course, during the process, you have to work with schedules and costume designers and money? With a lot of things. But I swear, this obscure intuition will always tell you what is good for the show.

Q: For *Alegria*, what was that obscure intuition?

A: In *Alegria*, I came up with two themes: Since we don't have anymore kings or governors, we have lost a lot of ideology and we don't really know who the leaders of the world are. They are not kings anymore. The relation of the power is changed now, so I imagined a little fable where the characters have lost their king. They are utterly lost without him, and he is w's the relation with the power when you don't have any more ideology or any more places to go. It's an idea of people who are lost; we don't know in which era or place. This was on my mind a lot because of what was going on in the world. You know, we had a lot of hope when the Wall fell down, when the USSR collapsed, but those hopes were actually gone quickly and are going nowhere now. Things are only more complicated now. So one thing was the relation with power and where do we go from here. And a parallel theme is nostalgia. The missing appointment. The rendezvous that's missed. The time that's passed.

Q: Cirque du Soleil has been around now for 15

years, and has inspired so many imitators. Just last month, I had to endure two of them in Los Angeles, Ingenieux and Barnum. Is imitation a form of flattery?

A: Yes, imitation is flattering. I do not have trouble with other people doing this type of show. I am absolutely against copyright. Copyright is an invention of the aristocracy to make profit. So if Ingenieux should want to take from Cirque, they are welcome to it. Once you do something, it does not belong to you anymore; it belongs to the world. The pyramids are not only for the Egyptians, they belong to me, too. (pause) And now it is time for Cirque du Soleil to reinvent itself.

Q: So what can we expect in this reinvention?

A: I am still thinking about it, about what I am feeling right now. You know, my shows come from in my heart when I begin. Yesterday, we are at war. Today, maybe it is over. It may be a good day today. If you asked me for an answer today about the next show, I would say I want two hours of people laughing. Comedy. So much that people have pain in their belly. This, and simplicity. Laughter and simplicity. It is good, yes?

Q: Is this a reaction to the violence and upheaval we, as a people, always seem teetering on?

A: It's a kind of reaction, yes. But also, I don't want to be so serious anymore. Poetry, in life and onstage, is not just about esoteric images and gravity. It is also in laughter. I say, let's laugh a little. Let's have comedy. It is a challenge to make people laugh. For two hours? I would be happy and proud to hear it for one hour.

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**WORKIN'
FOR TH'L
FOOM!!
STAN!!**

**BRUTARIAN BOTHERS THE FATHER OF THE SILVER AGE
O' COMICS, STAN LEE!!!**

INTERVIEW BY HOLLY DAY

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ART BY KING GEO



While it would be a flat-out lie to say that without Stan Lee, there would be no comic books, it wouldn't be a far cry to say that without Stan Lee, comic books may not have become as integrated in 20th century American

history as they are now. Stan Lee's creations have inspired and appeared on novelty products as varied as superhero underwear, Halloween costumes, PEZ dispensers, candy in general, and have been reworked into both Saturday morning cartoons and full-length movies. Honestly, when they were quizzing kids to see what was more recognizable, Joe Camel or Mickey Mouse, they should have taken the results to mean that Mickey Mouse had lost his appeal, and not that Joe Camel was some big hero to prepubescent, future smokers. I'll bet that if they'd held Joe Camel up next to Spiderman, the Camel people'd be the ones rethinking their mascot right now.

Always at the forefront of something, Stan Lee-with new partner Peter Paul-has launched yet another company, Stan Lee Media. The launch of the new company was as exciting and mysterious as anything Mr. Lee had ever done before-at a comic book convention in San Diego, press personnel were shown a brief movie with over-the-top Biblical overtones that presented Peter Paul to the group as though he was one of the Apostles, then told that the Internet, and the world, was about to be under attack by aliens and that the only way to prevent the attack was to buy up stock in Stan Lee Media. The audience was then given gift certificates granting them one free stock share-to be redeemed with a small handling fee that was actually the price of the stock itself. If it had been anyone else but Stan Lee....

Holly Day: First of all, I know that there are literally hundreds of characters associated with your name. Have you had involvement with all of the superheroes and supervillains that have come out of Marvel etc., or do you use a lot of outside writ-

ers?

Stan Lee: Well, what I did in the very beginning when we started Marvel, I created virtually all the characters, and I wrote the first few stories. And then once I got them started and I set the style, then, of course,—on some of them—I'd turn them over to other writers. Some of them, I kept writing myself. Characters like Spiderman, I think I wrote the first hundred issues, or even more, before I turned them over to anyone else. And I wrote more than a hundred issues of The Fantastic Four—some of the others, I'd only write ten to twenty issues, and then let another writer take it over from there, then after a while, that writer would pass the torch to another writer, and so forth.

H: What's been your favorite character or storyline? S: Well, it's hard to answer that, because they're all like my children. It's like asking a parent who their favorite child is. But I guess probably my favorite is Spiderman, because he's the best known, the most famous, and he's probably the one character who's most like me, because nothing ever goes right for him, and he's always beset by a million problems. If Stan Lee was a superhero, he'd be Spiderman.

H: What do you call yourself? Are you a cartoonist or...

S: No, I'm a writer. All my life, I've been a writer. At Marvel, I was also the editor and also the art director, and later I was the publisher and I was the president and then I was the chairman. Now I'm the Chairman Emeritus, and I'm the chairman of this new company, Stan Lee Media.



H: So did you just start out as a writer then?

S: Yes. That's the thing I've always done, primarily.

H: How did you branch into doing art as well?

S: Well, it's not that I did it, it's just that I worked with artists. I did draw, when I was young, so I was able to be an art director, but I didn't have either the time or the skills to draw comics. If I had wanted to draw the comics myself, I would have had to spend about a year practicing, and I never had the time because I was too busy writing the stories.

H: How many stories do you think you've written?

S: I have been told that I might have written more stories than were published than probably anybody in history. But I've never counted them. For a period of about fifteen years, I wrote at least one a day, or sometimes a whole magazine a day. That's a lot of stories. Then before and after that period, I wrote many, many other stories, although not on a daily basis.

H: What was your background prior to becoming a comic book writer?



S: When I was school, in high school and even before that, I had always written. Whenever they had a contest for the best composition or anything like that, I usually won it. When I was a senior in high school, the New York Herald Tribune—which was a big paper at the time—had a contest called “The Biggest News of the Week” contest. It was open to all high school students, and the idea was to write a 500-word essay about what you thought was the biggest news event of the week. I entered the contest three times, and I won it all three times, and the editor of the paper called me down and asked me to stop entering the contest and give someone else a chance to win.

Then, I got a job writing obituaries for a newspaper



syndicate. You know, when celebrities die, hours later, you see a long obituary in the newspaper about that person, and you wonder how they managed to write it so quickly? The obituary's probably been sitting on a shelf for a long time, because those are written way in advance. And that was my job: I was writing obituaries about living people, living celebrities. That's how you know when you're a celebrity, when a newspaper already has your obituary written and you're still alive. But I got very depressed writing about living people in the past tense, so I gave that up after a while.

Then, I got this job at a publishing company. I didn't even know I was writing for comics. I thought—yeah, there was an ad



for an assistance wanted at a publishing company. I applied, and I got the job, and then I found out that they wanted me to work on comic books. So I figured, well, I'll try it, get a little experience and then I'll go out into the real world. But I ended up staying, because it got interesting.

H: What does Stan Lee Media now encompass? Is it just the Web site, or—

S: It's really everything. We intend to be present in all forms of media. What we're doing, we think is a little different than what's been done in the past. Usually, people have taken properties that existed elsewhere and put them on the Web. We're creating original properties for the Web, so that they can then spin off into interactive games, into toys, into animated cartoons, into live television series or movies or whatever.

H: So what all do you have planned for the site?

S: We're going to launch a number of original superhero strips. One of them is called The Seventh Portal. It's an epic story dealing with the intended invasion of Earth from another dimension. It involves six superheroes that are beta testers for an interactive game company. Through the magic of cyberspace and their computers, they get transported into this other dimension, and it's up to them to stop the invasion and save the human race. They're confronted by a very powerful villain named Mongorr, who rules this other dimension, and they're trapped in a land where everything is against them—the population, the weapons. They don't even know where they are or how to get any-

where, they're all alone in this strange dimension. And they not only have to survive, but they have to find a way to defeat Mongorr. Each one of them is from a different part of the globe. It's the first team that's a truly international, global team. One is from South Africa, one is from Germany, one is from India, one is from Japan, one is from Brazil, and one is from America. And at the end of this big epic story, which will go on for quite a while, each one will return to his or her homeland, and there, have individual adventures that won't involve the team. So we will have created six superheroes who will be having adventures in six different parts of the world. However, there will be times when they all come together again and form that superpower team from the first story.

Besides The Seventh Portal, we also have 8-10



stand-alone superhero stories, which are characters that could be compared to Spiderman, or The Hulk, or Superman, or whatever-they're just individual heroes in their own stories. We'll be launching all those strips with The Seventh Portal. We're also going to be Time Warner's ACME City site, and we'll be giving away the largest global give-away of Web space in history. We're giving away 20 megabytes of Web space free to whoever wants it. We're going to sell collectibles, we're going to have all kinds of contests and games and many surprises that I can't even tell you about now. We want this to be the most visited site of all for those who like fantasy, science fiction, superheroes, imaginative stories, things that are very hip and cool and far-out and want to push the envelope in everything we do.

There'll also be a lot of humor. We play up humor a lot, too. We have a club called SCUZZLE, and I forget what the hell it stands for, wait-it's Searching Cyberspace for Undiscovered-well, we're searching for aliens, is what we're doing. And we're searching for Zygomorphic—and there's another word for what we're searching for that starts with Z that I forget-Lifeforms. It's going to be the responsibility for the people who join the club to make sure the Earth is safe from attack from cyberspace. That's a big responsibility, and they have to be ready to assume that before they can become an agent of SCUZZLE. So there's a lot of tongue-in-cheek stuff planned for the site. It's going to be warm, and funny, and off-beat and exciting. All the strips will have tremendous animation and sound-they'll be like a mini movie.

H: How often will they be updated?

S: As often as we can. We'll probably start off by updating it every three weeks, then we're going to try for every two weeks, then when we really get rolling, I'd like to do it every week. In the meantime, while you're waiting that week or three weeks

for the strip to be updated, we're going to have all these other strips you can follow also, so there's always going to be something new going on.

H: So is the Internet really about to be under attack by aliens?

S: Well, let's hope not. Let's hope that SCUZZLE can save us. All we need is enough warning to fend off any attack. I'm sure my SCUZZLE agents will be equal to the task.

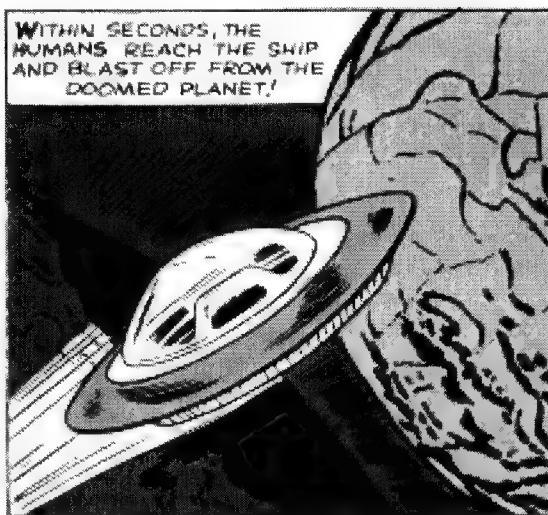
H: So do you think this is the future of the comic book?

S: Well, I don't know. I'm no predictor or prophet. But it's what we plan to do.

H: What do you think has been the biggest failure of comic books? I know sales are down by more than half of what they were ten years ago.

S: I think one of the reasons is that they're not accessible enough to new readers. If you pick up the average comic book, and you haven't read that series before, it's almost like you're coming in at the middle of a movie, and you don't know who the characters are or what they're doing. It used to

be much simpler to read and understand comic books. Now, they sort of take the readers for granted, rather than remembering that many comics are read by new readers who haven't read the last issue. You've got to make comics accessible to those readers as well as the die-hard fans. Another problem is that there just aren't as many places to buy comics. So many of the comic book store have shut down lately-I don't know how to solve that problem. I'm hoping that what we do on our Web site is going to help the whole comic book industry, because I am hoping-and I think there's a good chance-that we will revitalize an interest in comics. Our Web site is going to be accessible all over the world, and I'm hoping that with The Seventh Portal and all our other strips, we're going to make people aware again of the art of telling sto-



ries with pictures. Somehow or another, I'm hoping it'll work to the benefit of the whole comic book field.

H: Are you still involved in the creative aspects of the strips?

S: Oh, yes. I'm writing the whole Seventh Portal strip. The other 8-10 strips we're doing, I created the ideas for them for other people to write, but they're all based on my concepts.

H: How did you get involved in the movie "Mall Rats?"

S: The director, Kevin Smith, was a Marvel fan, and he wanted somebody to play a person that was something like me, somebody who was a little bit of a hero to fans of the comic book business, and then he decided that instead of getting somebody like Stan Lee, why not just get me? So he called me. I'm an old ham from way back. I've been a member of the Screen Actors Guild for years. When he called me up and asked me to do it, I said sure. I enjoyed it. I was wonderful in the movie (laughs).

H: Have you been in any other movies?

S: Well, I had a very small part in a movie called "Ambulance," about 10 years ago. I may have a few walk-on roles in some of the upcoming Marvel movies as well, just for fun.

H: I hate to ask this, but how old are you?

S: 76. You hate to ask it? I hate to answer it! I hate to be reminded.

H: Well, you didn't look that old in "Mall Rats," but I know you've been around for a while....

S: I was younger. It was about 2 years ago.

H: Do you have any political aspirations?

S: Oh, if somebody wanted me to be President, I would accept. But no, I don't have any. My whole concentration right now is to make Stan Lee Media the most successful, and the most popular site, on the Web. Considering the very brilliant and enthusiastic young people that I'm working with here, I don't know how we could miss.

H: So if it was there was a write-in ballot, and everyone voted for you to be President, you'd do it?

S: Oh, yes. But I'm a little discouraged about the tastes of the public. Like when I was in Mall Rats, I wasn't even nominated for an Oscar. I lost faith in people's judgement after that. (laughs) And if you write that down as if I was serious, I'll shoot you. So often in an interview, you say something as a joke, and the writer writes it down as though the person was serious, and when you read the article, the person comes across like they were a total idiot.

H: What's your home life like? What do you do to kick back?

S: I don't. I love working. I write. My wife and I occasionally watch some television or go out to dinner. I've been married now for 52 years to the absolutely greatest female on the face of the Earth. I'm a lot of fun, but she's even more fun. We just like being home. I do a lot of business traveling anyway, so when I don't have to travel, I love being home. I have my little room with my computer, where I write and play on the Internet, and when I'm not doing that, I watch TV. My wife and I have what we call our "dinner theater" at home, which is a television set in the dining room.



H: Do you have any advice for young artists and writers that might want to work on comic books?

S: Well, for writers, my advice is don't try to be a comic book writer. Try to be a writer first. Read the best literature you can, and become a good writer. Then, read your comics and try to write in the comic style. But you've got to start out by being a writer. The same goes for artists. The thing to do before you even try to be a comic book artist is learn perspective, anatomy, composition, layout, learn all the fundamentals of art, and then learn to draw comic books. So far as new comic book companies go, I say don't copy what other people do. Do what I have tried to do all my life, and what we're trying to do here at Stan Lee Media: do original things. Do things that nobody has done before, and try to find a way to do them interestingly, and with a dash of humor, and a lot of surprises. People love to be surprised, and they'll always love humor. But there's no way to teach any of this to anybody. Either you have it or you don't.

H: Is there anything specific that you wish you'd known when you started out?

S: Oh, yeah. I wish I had come to Hollywood earlier. I came out here 20 years ago, to LA, and I wish I had come 50 years ago. I love movies, and I love television, and I would have loved to have done more work in those fields. I do consider myself very lucky, because I think the Internet is the biggest thing ever. I think it's going to be the biggest form of media, of communication, and the most important element of life someday. I am so lucky that I still have a chance to get in on the ground floor, and to work with the kind of people that will enable us to leave our mark on the Internet.



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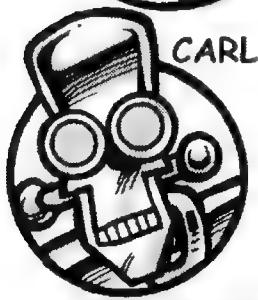
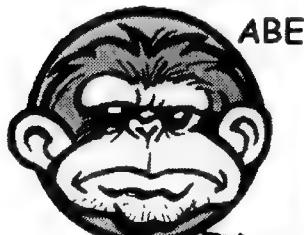
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THE THINKING APE BLUES

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PROGRESS
BROS.

by Mark Poutenis



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idea. The removal
of bugs limits
the spread of
bacteria and
they're an
excellent
source of
protein.

You two are fucking
retarded.

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ANDY KAUFMAN REVEALED! BEST FRIEND TELLS ALL!

Bob Zmuda, Matthew Hansen
(1999) Little Brown Books

Here we have a somewhat truncated biography of comic/madman Andy Kaufman, as seen through the eyes of his chief partner-in-crime, Bob Zmuda. Truncated because Zmuda only met Kaufman after he was already somewhat of an underground sensation in Manhattan comedy clubs. The two kindred spirits proceeded to wreak havoc on unsuspecting audiences everywhere for the next 12-13 years, until Kaufman was stilled forever by lung cancer. I'm typing these words the day before the Kaufman movie, *Man On The Moon* is released. While I'm sure Jim Carrey does a fabulous job impersonating Andy on the silver screen, I'd also bet the family jewels that the movie turns him into a sweet, lighthearted, not-yet-grown-up kid with a song in his heart, whom most found to be hilarious . . . NOT the way I remember him - nor the way this book portrays him. The man always struck me as having watched way too much professional wrestling as a kid . . . and I don't bring this up because of his grappling women (which, as Zmuda points out, was primarily just a way for Andy to indulge one of his big time fetishes, as well as get laid). He always came across to me as trying to play a pro wrestling heel - he was there to generate heat from the crowd, and to get them involved - if one thing didn't work, he'd try another, with his chief goal being to irritate and make the crowd nervous. I seriously doubt that this will come across in the new flick (but I hope I'm wrong).

But back to *Andy Kaufman Revealed!* While I'm tempted (as some reviewers have been) to say that Zmuda spends way too much time talking about himself, dammit, some of this - especially his experiences working with the deranged screenwriter identified only as "Mr. X" - is among the funniest stuff in the book. We also get exposed to Kaufman's more bizarre eccentricities - his superstitious rituals, TM-related weirdness (including the "internal flossing" with cheesecloth), fetishes (Elvis, women wrestling), stories about his being a cock-master general (he supposedly slept with at least 1/3 of the women he wrestled, as well as hundreds of others), and various practical jokes he and Zmuda played off-screen. We discover the differences between the two Tony Cliftons (he was much meaner when played by AK), learn about his deep dislike for Taxi, and relive many of his best moments on and off the screen. Lastly, we sadly learn that his death was not faked, as some have hinted . . . unless, of course, Zmuda is putting us on throughout this book . . . Highly



recommended. Perhaps Bill Zehme's new Kaufman biography, *Lost in the Funhouse* will answer some questions I have about how Andy wound up the way he did in the first place.

john oliver

FLOWERS IN THE DUSTBIN - THE RISE OF ROCK AND ROLL, 1947-1977

James Miller

(1999) Simon & Schuster

And of course, what's left unsaid in the title (taken from The Sex Pistols' "God Save the Queen"): the demise of the genre. Which, with the triumph of rap, the emergence of electronica and the all-pervasive influence of grunge, ain't too far from the truth. Two time National Book Award finalist isn't interested in such mundane concerns however; in fact, he isn't even interested in limning the emergence of rock in roll. What he wants to do is tell stories, to take epochal dates in music, e.g., Presley's appearance on Uncle Miltie's show, the release of *Blackboard Jungle* and *American Graffiti*, the Sex Pistols chat with Bill Grundy, and kick around their import, squeeze every last drop of meaning, leaving the reader with the far-reaching consequences. Most of the times the approach works, sometimes it doesn't; but since Jimmy can spin a tale with the best of them and because he's a writer who knows his stuff you're not gonna care whether the Velvets were the most influential rock band since The Beatles or if it all started with Wynonie Harris or that Patti Page shook things up with "Tennessee Waltz" while Ike Turner's and Jackie Brenston's "Rocket 88" ruffled only a few Afro-Americans' tail feathers. The points Miller makes are true in one way or another and you're gonna learn a lot of fascinating things. Dozen of things. Like, did you know, that Little Richard's breakout hit, "Tutti-Frutti" was originally about anal sex and thus the lyrics had to be altered before the record could be released? Or that one of the reasons "Rock Around The Clock" when first released went nowhere and only became a hit because the producers of *Blackboard Jungle* turned the treble and bass way up so that the song literally jumped off the screen and pounded the viewer in the head. Ironically, it's telling details like this that puts the bloom on *Flowers* and not the conceits, the big pronouncements at the pith of every chapter.

dom salemi

ALT.CULTURE

Steven Daly and Nathaniel Wice (1995)

Harper Perennial

While the Millennium doth approach and this guide to whacked culture be almost five years old, it tis, nevertheless, necessary for your understanding. Understanding of that which informs almost everything else. Distrust and cynicism underlies its approach. To the subjects contained therein and to the completed work itself Thus the reason for calling itself "an" A-Z Guide to American Culture and not "the" A-Z Guide. So reason not the reason for the New Yorker and not Ben Is Dead (although it is mentioned in the zine essay), Trent Reznor in place of Nick Cave (acknowledged however in the Lollapalooza entry), Peter Bagge standing in for Mary Fleener (oops, here she is in the comics discursis); it will be made clear if thou choose to readest deeply enough. Then wilt thou see the cleverness in the project is not the subtly sardonic style of writing, which must be admitted, makes for entertaining reading, but the continuing relevance of that which was included and the continuing irrelevance of that which is included in that which is other. As with Keith Haring in the entry for Swatch, and Kathy Acker in Transgressive Fiction. Web site listings hast been provided for further explorations in zeitgeist kitsch.

dom salemi

INSIDE THE MOUSE: WORK AND PLAY AT DISNEY WORLD

The Project On Disney

(1995) Duke University Press

This is a good book, but.

But what? Good question, I suppose. We'll do the contents here in a minute, but first some words about the folks who put this thing together, ok?

First of all, what the hell is "The Project On Disney?" Right there on the title page, instead of an author's name. What's up with that? The book, surprisingly enough, has VERY little to say on that. On the back cover, you get all there is to get when it comes to finding out just exactly what "The Project On Disney" might be. One lonely paragraph at the bottom of the cover which simply identifies "The Project" as three English Professors from Duke University, and a photographer who also teaches at something or other called the "Creative Arts

Workshop" in Connecticut. Pardon me while I'm suddenly underwhelmed at the scope and magnitude of this "Project."

And it gets better. "The Project" is actually, I think (The tome remains steadfastly unclear on this kind of stuff.) part of a larger deal that calls itself "Post-Contemporary Interventions" and is edited (whatever that might really mean) by a certain Stanley Fish, and Fredric Jameson, neither of whom are identified to the least little degree other than giving their names and affiliation with the aforesaid "interventions."

"Post-Contemporary Interventions"? What the hell is THAT? Stop a minute and take a look at that, alright?

Does it make any sense at ALL? Since when did a work become an "intervention?" How, exactly, does a book "intervene"? And what the hell's going on with "Post-Contemporary"? Go get the damned dictionary and look up "contemporary" and then come back and tell me HOW there can ever be a "Post-Contemporary." The more I look at the term, the less sense it makes. Little red flags are waving all over the place here, and for good reason. Turns out we've got some by-golly Commies writing for us and they're not the least little bit shy about using all the overblown phraseology and opaque lingo that only Commies can come up with.

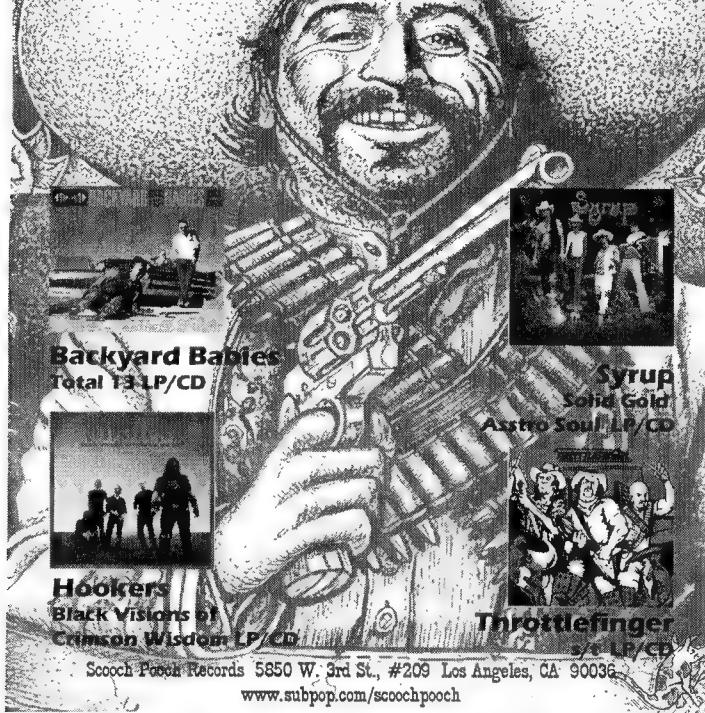
Oh brother! Commies! Won't these wankers EVER get the message? It's OVER, dorks. DEAL with it. It was one of the all time worst crackpot ideas ever hatched and it collapsed under the weight of its own encrusted bullshit, and there's nothing any of you lingering pinko bastards can do about it. Give it and silly Commie lingo like "Pre-Postmodern," and "Post-Contemporary" and "collectivities" and "concretizes" a rest already!

Now, where were we?

Oh yeah, the book.
Almost forgot the sucker.

Despite the dogma and cant, *Inside The Mouse* takes a sharp knife to the Disney psyche and just DISSECTS it. Rip zip whip flip, and there it is, on the lab table, reeking to high heaven and looking perfectly evil. And, as a bonus, an exposé of the stupefying extent of NONSENSE that Disney entails. Come to think of it, the throng that goes to the Disney parks like an endless swarm of lemmings comes in for some good whacks too. Gobs of interesting

We need the stinkin' Rock & Roll !!



insights and revealing truths. Too fucking bad the idiot Communists had to write it, though, I'm SURE somebody, anybody, with a half-decent command of the English language could have done a much better job in about half the words. Read this thing anyhow; it's well worth your time.

james maclaren

BAG OF TOYS

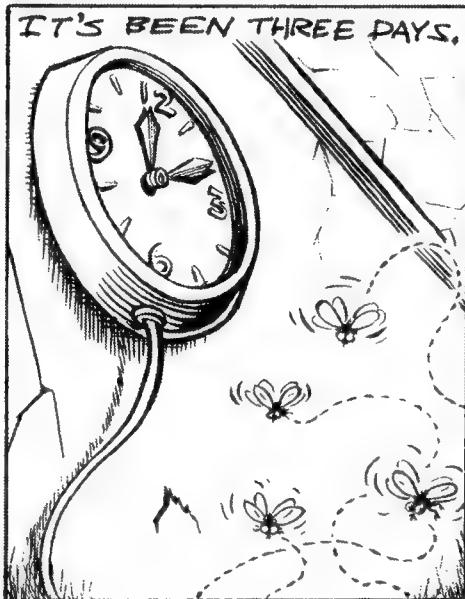
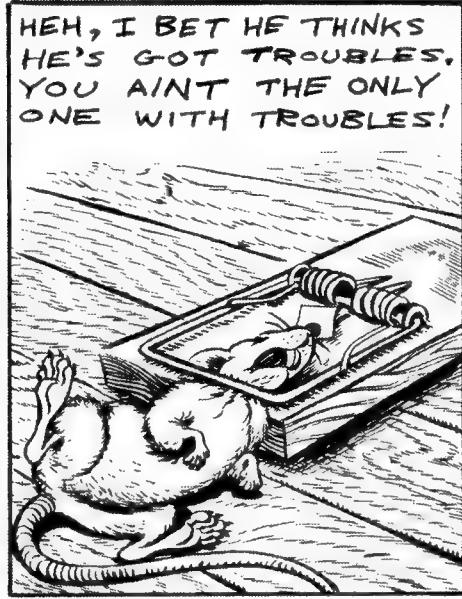
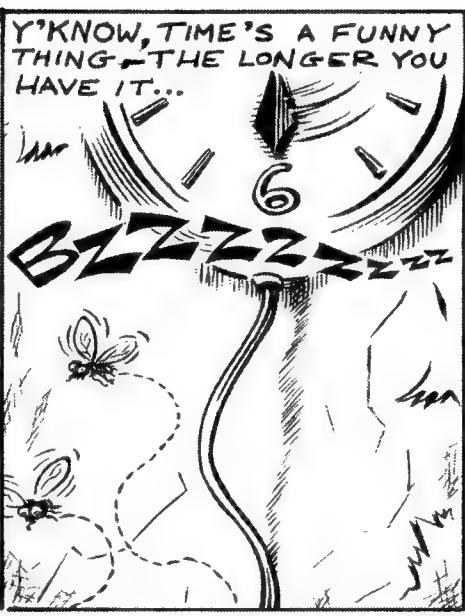
David France

(1999) Pinnacle Books

The cover of this thing looked very promising - a leather bondage mask with hundreds of zippers, and a promise of a tale of true crime - murder, in this case. The 1985 New York burning/shooting/torture murder of a fey and wan young girly-man model from Norway, Egil Vesti, followed by the trial and conviction of confessed killer Bernard LeGeros, however, only takes up about a fifth or so of this book. The majority of *Toys* deals with the nefarious and disgusting behavior of one of New York's best known art dealers from the late 70s and 80s - Andrew Crispo. A very sick fucker who may or may not have also participated in the grisly S&M murder, Crispo appears to have gotten away scot free. Actually, the Crispo story is much more interesting than the murder or its aftermath. It's a kind of twisted American Dream run amok. A self-made man who essentially slept, cheated, and extorted his way to the top of the Gay art world, Crispo is a first-class sleazeball, heavily in to the S side of S&M, every kind of drug he can get his hands on, and every kind of get-rich-quick scheme that pops out of the top of someone else's head. A friend of a wide variety of influential people (such as Roy Cohn), Crispo managed to keep his head above water, financially and legally, until the bottom recently fell out in the 90s (see below). Oh, and Bernard LeGeros, the convicted killer of Vesti, was Crispo's man Friday during the mid 80s. LeGeros has maintained all along that Crispo planned and participated in the murder . . . yet charges were never filed. You'll have to read the surprising last chapter (added since the first publication of this book in 1992) to determine the probable reason for this. A compelling read, that may make you want to take a bat to wash off the dirt after reading about some of Crispo's seedier exploits (or the details about what went on in such 70s clubs as the Mineshaft).

Epilogue: Among the calamities befalling Crispo in the 90s - serving jail time for income tax evasion, his dream house full of valuable artwork mysteriously exploding (may or may not have been an insurance scam), and his recent (May 1999) arrest and imprisonment on extortion charges (he threatened to kidnap his bankruptcy lawyer's child after the lawyer refused to give him money). He has also been named in pending trials of several other individuals involved in money-laundering, extortion, murder, selling babies, and making/distributing snuff movies.

john oliver





I WAS A TEENAGE DOMINATRIX

Shawna Kenney
(1999) Retro

Robert Louis Stevenson was once heard to gasp while being birched, "That the world is so full of wonderful things, we should all be happy as kings." Shawna Kenney brings a similar whistle-while-life-works-on-you sensibility to her cackhandedly sleazy tale of growing up wrong in the DC suburbs. The sordid details are here - the niceties that must be observed in dildo training, the correct posture for golden showers - but chronic masturbators beware, this is not a stroke book. Rather, it's a desperately breezy, addlepated bildungsroman by a piece of trailer park trash who fancies herself an intellectual: "After whipping him until his ass was the reddest of any ass I had ever seen, he stayed and we had a great conversation about literature," etc. Needless to say, this paradoxical sensibility results in unintended laughs at the

author's expense almost every step of the way.

dom salemi

I WAS A MURDER JUNKIE - THE LAST DAYS OF G.G. ALLIN

Evan Cohen
(1999) Recess Records

What was a nice Jewish boy doing on the road with G.G. Allin and The Murder Junkies? Read this 128 page, big-print paperback book in about thirty minutes, and find out. You'll learn more than you ever wanted to about G.G.'s sexual proclivities (Hint: golden showers) or the constantly masturbating Dino the drummer and his enormous penis (as opposed to G.G.'s famous microscopic member). Actually, if you've seen Todd Haynes' documentary *Hated*, the above is about all you'll pick up that's new. The assorted woman-batterings by G.G., madcap antics with feces on stage,

hijinks with alcohol and drugs off-stage, etc.

- seen it, read about it already. A bonus picture CD (with a nude GG disgracing it) is included, but I haven't played it yet. If you can get this memoir for a reasonable price, do so, but it lists for \$15-16, and I believe I paid even more (it wasn't in the computer at the Tower I bout it at - the manager charged me something like \$17.50 for it . . . so maybe I SHOULD play the CD sometime and see what's on it . . . Oh HELL, I know what's on it, badly recorded and played, third-rate, ersatz Stooges hard rock . . . which ain't bad but ain't worth no \$17.50 . . . \$7.50 maybe)

john oliver

FOOTSUCKER

Geoff Nicholson
(1996) Overlook Press

The unnamed narrator of Geoff Nicholson's dark comic novel has a problem. No, it's not the fact that he's a foot fetishist nor that said

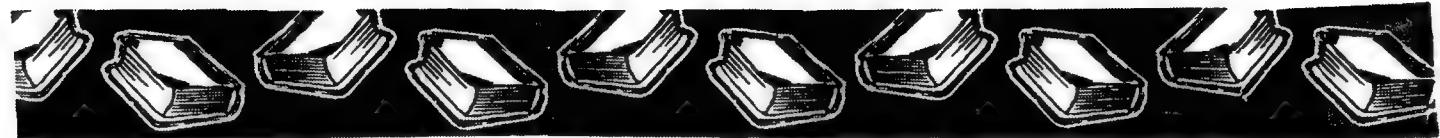
ZEKE
IS BACK TO LAY A
DIRTY
SANCHEZ
ON YOUR LIP

THE DWARVES
COME CLEAN"

ZEKE IS AN AGNOSTIC
against evolution, because only God
could create a band like this!
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WICKED IN THE TEETH (86513-1/2)



fetishist: (a) pesters women about their feet and their shoe collections by posing as a researcher for a shoe manufacturer; (b) surreptitiously snaps photos of women's feet by means of a camera carefully hidden in a small leather shoulder-bag; (c) steals women's shoes from public places; and (d) owns a collection dedicated to his predilection that could easily fill one of the Smithsonian buildings. The problem calls herself Catherine, a lovely, soi-disant adventuress who shares, in some sense, her new-found lover's passion. That is, she recognizes the perfection of her own feet and believes the best footwear enhances and displays the foot. She is not so sure, however, that it is possible to fall in love only with the feet. The feet, after all, cannot be detached and so too with love; it cannot be moved from the one who moves. Love is total, it is all-enveloping, it is . . . well, it's certainly something more than a pair of black court shoes from Seditionaries. And, most importantly, love has consequences. "Terrible, violent, appalling consequences" involving murder, degradation and a shoemaker named Harold. All played for laughs of course but not before we're asked to ponder the nature of folly, the amorality of art, and the sacrifices demanded by l'amour.

dom salemi

HITLER'S NIECE
Ron Hansen
(1999) HarperCollins

He fancied himself a painter but couldn't master perspective. He told everyone who would listen he was a great thinker yet his autobiography, *My Struggle*, was inchoate and largely unreadable. A mesmerizing speaker, yes, but what matter if the speaking left him





smelling like a hellish mixture of skunk and offal. Yet even fresh from the bath with the hair carefully oiled, his face patted with a liniment of aloe his body was disquieting: "hairless, female breasts of a girl in puberty, and a flaccid, purple, uncircumcised penis that was like a short thumb above a boy's compact scrotum." These the reflections and observations of Geli Raubal, the daughter of Adolf Hitler's widowed half-sister, dead at twenty-three; the only woman Hitler claimed he ever loved. The consensus of historical opinion fingers Der Führer as Geli's murderer; still, Hansen's resolution of the loose ends surrounding Raubal's death is, while artfully done, not the real pull here, nor is the sick, budding romance (the heart of the novel) between the two. Rather it is the slow, ineluctable efflorescing of the Hitler we know and love that keeps us turning the pages. That and the people he attracts - Goring, Goebbels, Himmler, et al. Vividly drawn (and in some cases quite charming) monsters who make evil look so attractive we're left wondering how Geli could resist.

dom salemi

MUSIC FOR TORCHING

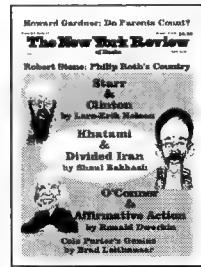
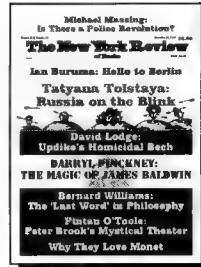
A.M. Homes

(1999) Rob Weisbach Books

A.M. Homes last novel, *The End of Alice*, a disturbing, highly poetic dalliance with love, perversity and serial killing, was named the worst book of 1998 by Entertainment Weekly. So you know how good it was and how good A.M. Homes is. She's won all sorts of awards, too, including a Guggenheim Fellowship and one from the National Endowment for the Arts. Artforum and The New Yorker both publish her work. Here she asks us to get inside the heads of Paul and Elaine, an upwardly mobile couple on a fast track to nowhere. Getting inside the pair is a rather difficult task, however, as the heads no longer work quite properly. At times, things are seen quite clearly. Much of the time, too much of the time as of late, it is akin to looking through a glass somewhat cloudy. It is on one such day, Paul and Elaine decide to burn their lovely prefabricated model house down. They take their two children to a motel as the flames lick the sides of the house. When they return early the following morning the couple find their home still standing. After being taken in by neighbors, House Beautiful couple, there is a satori of sorts: life must be made over. Don't ask "how" or "why" just let things happen. So. So Paul acquires a crotch tattoo and gets serious about office furnishings. Elaine begins a lesbian affair with House Beautiful Pat and becomes Mr. Goodwrench. The kids grow distant. Friends and family get weirder. There's no rhyme or reason to any of this. Still, it all makes perfect sense: if you allow yourself to no longer pretend you are in control then things take control of you. Especially in suburbia where nothing, nothing, is ever as it seems. Infernally readable, darkly comic, *Music For Torching* argues, in a deceptively flat prose

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style, that to live the unexamined life is to burn continually in a non-purgatorial flame.
dom salemi

UFOs, JFK, AND ELVIS

Richard Belzer

(1999) Ballantine Books

Don't you just hate empty-headed reviewers who fill-up their critiques with what they think are analogous incidents from their personal life. Said stories give you little insight as to the book or disc under discussion and are often rather boring to boot. The problem with conspiracies, or rather, one's belief in them, however, is that it's always personal. Try to interject a little life in a cocktail party by mentioning the

other planets or our own government's finding that there was more than one gunman shooting at President Kennedy and you can bet your bottom dollar that no one at that gathering is ever going to be seen with you in public again. It's okay to venture the opinion that *The Sound of Music* is the greatest movie ever made. Or to say with a straight face we needed that war with Iraq to feel good about ourselves again. No one's going to think twice. It's just an opinion. Expressing even a willingness to discuss a conspiracy, any conspiracy, though, will have you forevermore labeled as a kook. At best.

So it's personal. Actor, comedian, and now published author, Richard Belzer knows this and he's here to help. No, the Belz is not going to offer incontrovertible

pre-Parkinson's Muhammad Ali laid that one to rest when he claimed Elvis lived right down the street from him in Kalamazoo, Michigan - but rather some helpful strategies for shutting up that loudmouth relative who ruins Thanksgiving every year by babbling about what a shame it is that Ruby killed Oswald before he had a chance to confess.

Here are just a few of them:

Use only the "facts" established in large circulation newspapers and government records. Using this method, your response to that obnoxious relative would be: "Which Oswald? The 5'11 Oswald who enlisted in the Marines? Comrade Oswald who was allowed

RICHARD BELZER

UFOs, JFK, and Elvis

CONSPIRACIES YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE CRAZY TO BELIEVE

to leave for Russia at 5'6? Or the one who was measured for the coffin at 5'9?"

Always try to put into play generally accepted scientific theory. This will not only allow you to prove Oswald couldn't have done it but allow you to open up for discussion such crackpot topics as whether the Moon landing was a fraud staged by NASA to hoodwink innocent taxpaying citizens. Alright, maybe not the latter, but it sure beats the hell out of me as to why the lunar module's thrusters blast didn't leave module-size craters in the dust while every step taken by the astronauts had them sinking up their ankles in Moon mud.

Cite members of the opposition, i.e., the mainstream, to support your argument. Nothing like dropping a bomb like The New York Times admission that many of its reporters are allied with the CIA to dispel the notion that only the liberal media pays much attention to conspiracy matters.

Never forget, that no matter what you say, even in front of family and close friends, you're still going to be thought of as a weirdo. So remember, keep it short, and never ever forget that you're entertaining first, educating second. We understand that this can be quite difficult for anyone but a brilliant stand-up comedian. Therefore, it is suggested that you read and study, UFOs, JFK, and Elvis, until you master the technique of holding an audience while extemporizing on crop circles, cattle mutilations, Marilyn Monroe's so-called suicide and the like. You'll be glad you did. And who knows? You may end up a better and more decent person.

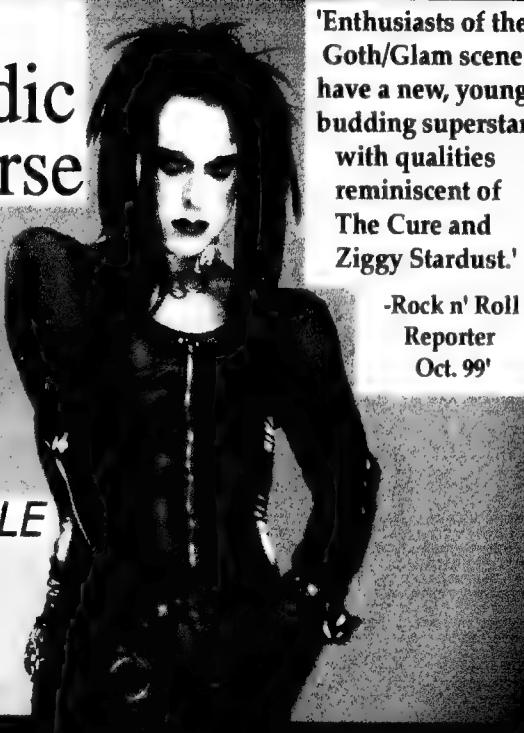
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TRAILER TRASH

by TOM GERENCER

art by Mark Poutenis

Hell is that place you should've left long ago, but didn't, and won't.

For me it was called Hamilton. A regal sounding name; full of pride and early American nobility, but don't let it fool you. I don't know where the armpit of the world is, but Hamilton is a little plantar's wart, not far away. I lived there in a scale model of a mobile home made of 30-weight cardboard and lime-green paint. A small Swiss cheese of a place, and it didn't smell very good, either. Not to mention there was no heat.

It was Fall, and so of course, cold. I sat at my desk dressed in multiple fleece jackets and lycra skullcap and gloves and watched my breath as I listened to the wind swishing in the trees and the neighborhood dogs moaning outside.

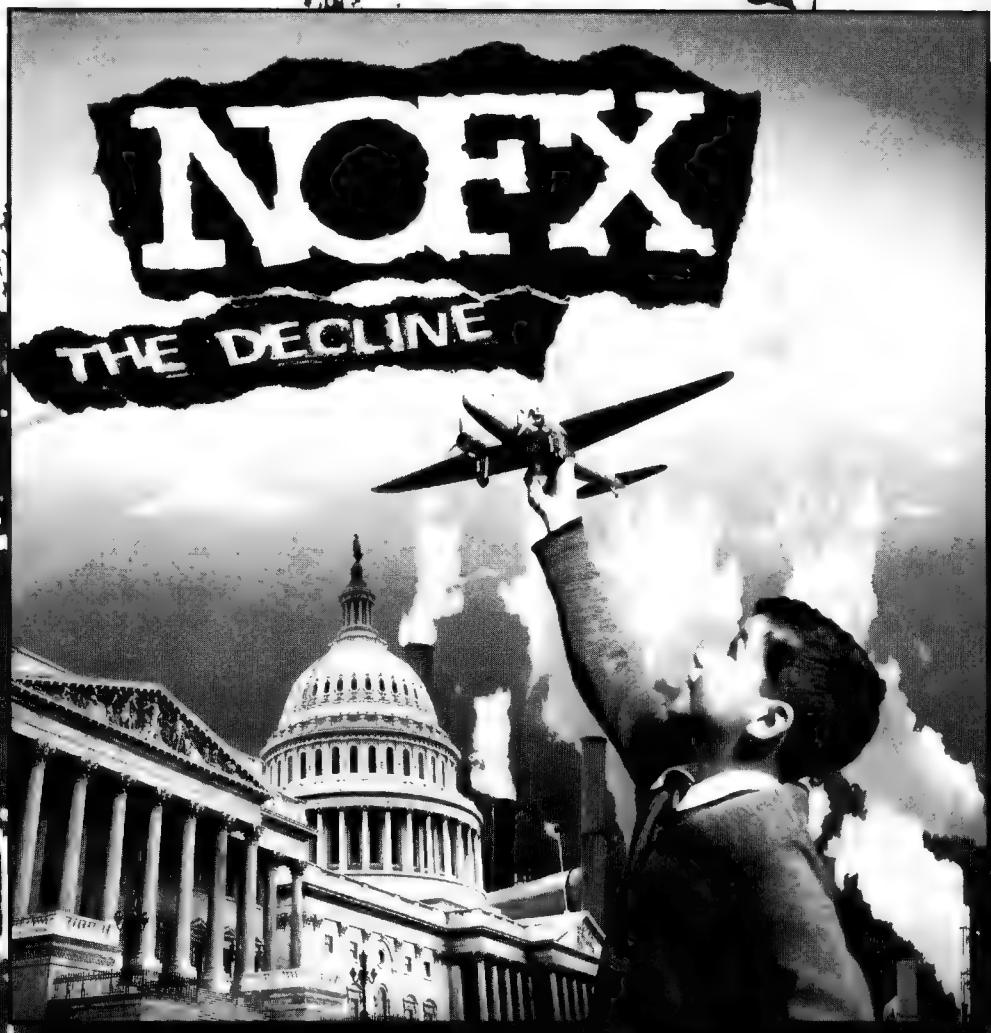
I remember wishing I was somewhere else - anywhere else at all - and then amending that wish to exclude large portions of New Jersey. I tried playing solitaire for awhile, but my heart wasn't in it. They were trying to destroy the world again, you see, and it was up to me to stop them.

O R

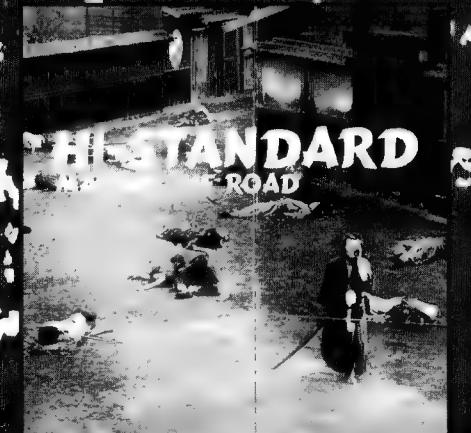


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An example:

A many-headed demon came in through the window, newly arrived from the ninth layer of Gehenna, steaming softly and reeking of cinnamon and smoking hair. He gave me the once-over, snarled, and claimed only to have come to borrow a cup of sugar.

"I don't think so" I said, and lunged at him. We grappled, knocking out paper-thin walls; rattling the foundations of the universe. He bit at me with one head, howled with another, and used a third to render a scathing critique of my decor.

"I've seen sections of Asgoth more tastefully decorated than this," he said, and I threw him through the kitchen cupboards.

"You're going back now," I told him, bleeding from a cut on the jaw. "Your time is coming, but it isn't yet."

He pulled himself up from the midst of my Tupperware collection and roared at me with the voice of Legion.

"It is sooner than you think, interloper," he bellowed, and launched himself at me like something the Air Force would keep secret. We went through the bathroom wall and wound up on the floor, which afforded me the opportunity to give a few of his heads a whirlpool in the toilet.

"I command that you stop this," he howled with a free head.

"Your command is my wish," I soothed, and I hit him over the back with the medicine cabinet.

I repeated this action a few times and, having rendered him thus senseless, I stuffed him back through the window; by that I mean the ancient one, the one I dug

up in the timeless sands of Giza, the one that leads to a thousand whens and wheretofores, and not, as you may have imagined, the normal louvered-type that comes standard in most trailer homes.

I made myself a peanut butter and banana sandwich then - by way of simple sustenance - and was halfway through it, munching, when something that looked mostly like a squid slid in through the window and landed with a wetish plop on the carpet.

"No peace," I said, and got up to do battle. It threw me into a bookshelf, and I broke a velvet Elvis over its cephalus.

"God, you're ugly," I told it as it wrapped several tentacles around my neck and torso. It screeched then, and I seized the opportunity to jam a fortuitous bottle of Allen's Coffee Brandy down its beak. I made short work of it from there, using its confusion as a chance to hack off several of its pseudopodia with a machete I keep handy and sharp for just such an occasion, then battered it motionless with a nearby kitchen chair.

I stuffed it back through the window and collapsed against a wall, panting. I wished hopelessly for help. They were coming faster . . . and more furiously.

I am the protector, you see. The chosen one. He who watches over the Window of the Worlds, and all that. The only reason I can do it at all is that the Things are characteristically weak when they first step through(something about their having to give up most of their supernatural power to make the trip).

I didn't ask for this so-called honor. I'd really rather be doing other things, you know, like furthering a career of some sort, starting a 401K, and meeting - if not the girl of my dreams - at least the woman of my realistic aspirations.

But I'd been given a choice by the Dark Ones; the ones neither evil nor good and yet both, somehow, in the extreme. The ones I'd rather not talk about or think about if it's all the same to you, which I hope to whatever God is in charge of all this it is.

They had yanked me down to their eternal dark - their timeless nothing - one day while I was half in the middle of a cheese sandwich and a big gulp of milk. I spat the



milk out all over the place.

We got the initial disbelief out of the way, and the Dark Ones explained to me they didn't, personally (so to speak) care what I did, but that the time of reckoning was nigh, and I had been chosen, and so forth, and if I did not go to the timeless sands of Giza and dig up the Window of the Worlds, the Things were going to get through, grow strong, and rend the earth asunder.

Well, I liked the earth somewhat okay as it was, so I told them that if it was all the same to them, I'd rather not have it rent at all, asunder nor otherwise, and that was pretty much how I got the job.

They told me it was a good choice; I'd be granted superhuman strength for the duration of such reckoning, and that whatever came out of the window, I'd have to send back or the last trumpet would sound. They also told me I'd be provided for in the meantime, and all my earthly desires would be met whilst I was busy saving the world, but evidently they don't read the papers much down in the eternal dark, or if they do, they skip the financial section, because they didn't seem to have a handle on what inflation had been doing to the value of the dollar since back before time began. What I mean is, a check for \$147.50 would mysteriously appear, once a week, under my pillow. It was placed there, I could only assume, by the Frugality Fairy. I had to fly third class to the timeless sands of Giza. I couldn't even afford a cab from the airport. Not that I'm complaining, but it doesn't seem like much, you know, for saving the world on a regular basis, I mean.

Anyway, I got the window, and I moved to Hamilton (judging it to be safely removed from the rest of the world) and I got my groceries delivered, and paid my bills, and had the trash taken away and the lawn



mowed, and it went on for about six months.

One day, while I was trying like hell not to read Thus Sprach Zarathustra, which was the only book in the mobile home I hadn't read yet, a foul-smelling pterodactyl-type thing flew in the window and out through the trailer's far wall, leaving a hell of a hole.

"Damn it," I said, throwing the Nietzsche book at my Christmas cactus and grabbing my 30.06. When I got out onto the lawn, I was happy to see that the bird-creature was soaring in circles above, apparently reveling in the sight of the brave new world it was to conquer, because that gave me a chance to put five or six bullets in it and, once it had fallen, to drag it back inside. I shoved it back through the window and called a local carpenter.

The last two weeks were the toughest. The Things from beyond were coming through with a frequency with which I could barely handle. I was frying some burgers one night when two of them came through at once. One was a sort of amorphous gray blob of jellied, cheesy substance that melted holes in the kitchen linoleum, and the other stood on three legs and breathed fire with the head of a python. They ran interference for each other. The blob engulfed my refrigerator while the fire-breather squared off to me.

"Jacob wrestled with the angel!" it hissed.

"Who won?" I asked, and clobbered it with the microwave.

I thought I had them on the run, then, but such was not the case; the blob chose that moment to spit the refrigerator at me, knocking me through the wall and out onto the back lawn.

My neighbor, Mr. Hennessey, was watering his zinnias.

"Beg pardon," I said.

I crawled out from under the fridge and shook off some leftover spaghetti, taking a moment to breathe before stalking back through the hole. The blob had started to leave via the front door, but I was having none of it. I grabbed it by its ichor, but it yielded like pudding and I began to be sucked inside the blob's viscous core. While I tried to work out a way to avoid

this eventuality, the fire-breather snuck up behind me and sunk its fangs into my neck.

I don't have to tell you, I'm sure, that even portions of New Jersey were looking mighty good at this point.

I whirled, and kicked, and leveraged the fire-breather into the blob. While they struggled to extricate each other, I got free and took out a can of white gas from under the sink.

It took days to get the stains out.

When the prescribed six months were up, and the reckoning was over, I was drawn, once again, into their eternal dark. This time I'd been clipping my nails.

"Don't you guys ever knock?" I asked.

"We have brought you hence," was their answer, "because the reckoning has ended."

"So?" I replied, what do you reckon?"

"We're not sure," was their response. We will have to hide the Window of the Worlds for another millennium, at the end of which there will be another time of reckoning."

"How nice for you," was all I could think of. "But listen, I want to talk to you about my salary."

"The time for talk is ended," was their answer to this. "Oh yeah?" I was getting steamed, "and what am I supposed to do now?"

"That is none of our concern," they rejoined somewhat pompously. That's gratitude for ya. Still, the Dark Ones made known to me that although no further financial compensation would be forthcoming, they might possibly be persuaded to throw a little special something into the bargain, in return for an extra-deep reburial of the window.

"So what are we talking?" I queried, "eternal life?"

"Not quite," they said, and took a few golden moments to explain they'd bestowed their last quantity off this particular commodity upon a previous chosen one - a statement that made me think with singular suspicion about Dick Clark.

"We propose to give you," they told me,

"Total knowledge."

"What do you mean, 'total'?" I wanted to know.

To which they replied, "Total. All-encompassing. Full and complete. Either that or we could flay you alive and suspend you for ten-thousand eternities in the deepest depths of nowhere."

I told them I'd settle for the total-knowledge deal.

So I've got total knowledge now. It isn't all it's cracked up to be because, first, who wants to know everything there is to know about things like cabbage and barium enemas, and second, I am now unequivocally certain no matter what I do I will never get ahead of my bills. Last, I'll never get back the security deposit I threw down on the mobile home, and Hamilton is still pretty much Hell, but it has its moments.

Last Thursday, for example, while I was loading the Window of the Worlds into my Ford Gremlin for the trip back to Giza, a thick-muscled Fire-Beast from the Nether Planes of Sheol leapt out and snarled, "Sorry I'm late."

"You get your deer yet?" he asked, leering out his side window. When I told him I had not, he shook his head, called me a simpleton and tried to drive off down the road . . .

Later, as I was rolling the unconscious beast back through the window, I smiled to myself and thought, "Ah, Hell isn't such a bad place once you get into the rhythm of things."

-B





Okay, end of the year (although this issue, thanks to the lazy bastards who do layout, probably won't be in your hands until February!) and you know what that means, kids! That's right, it's time for the coveted Brutarian Top Nine Awards. Yes, Mr. Ozzy Fide is putting in his two cents and letting his rapidly dwindling audience know what really rocked his boat during the last twelve months. Some of the flicks on the list may have been released late last year but you know what? Oz is not a slave to time. It's Mr. Fide's list and the only rule is that there are no rules. So without further ado, here are the best films of the year. The order is unimportant as they're all equally praiseworthy:

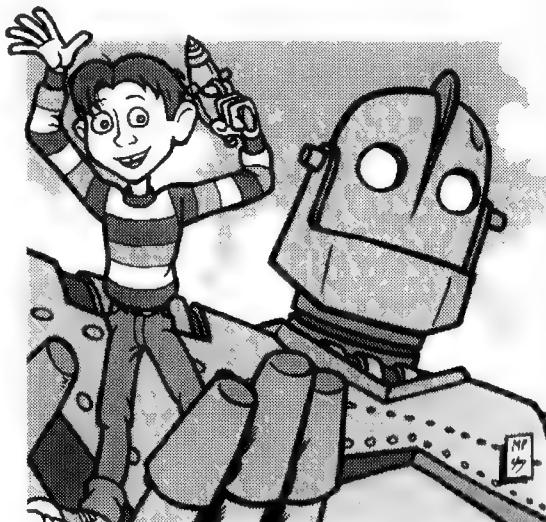
IRON GIANT

This movie was buried by the dickheads at Warner Brothers because the previous 2 movies in that studio's summer package, *Wild Wild West* and *Deep Blue Sea*, tanked like drunken pigs, so WB cut their losses, chopped all other summer flicks' advertising budgets and concentrated on the fall movies.

And that is the biggest crime in modern film history. Why?

Because this movie is, frame for fucking frame, such a complete package, such a gorgeously seamless piece of film-making it's kinda scary. It's based on a children's book by England's poet laureate Ted Hughes. You got other flicks made this year based on something by a poet laureate? Didn't think so.

Producer/director Brad Bird (of *Simpsons* fame) so uncompromisingly crafted a film Ozzy didn't think could be made in this or any other film period: an intelligent, touching, beautiful, laugher-ass-off, no-singin'-no' dancin', adult and kid friendly animated fable. Throw *Fantasia*, *King Kong*, some Manga stuff, *Dr. Strangelove*,



Norman Rockwell, *Frankenstein* and *Mars Attacks* into a blender and buckle the fuck up. What's more classic than the tried and true genre of a boy and his giant robot? If this movie doesn't rock you from your brain to your colon, you have no soul. See it or die.

FIGHT CLUB

Hands down, the date movie of the year. Edward Norton forces Brad Pitt to try something he hasn't done in years: act. Then bashes his face in. That alone is worth the price of admission. Goddamn, if this movie doesn't make you wanna go quit your job and kick your best friends ass just to show him you love him.

Along with the amazing *American History X*, Norton is establishing himself as just about the greatest, riskiest actor of this decade. An almost all Chemical Brothers soundtrack punctuated by the Pixies' greatest song ("Where Is My Mind" from *Surfer Rosa*) will send shivers down your spine. As the credits roll you're itching to get out of your seat to go some bar or open field to start discussing it with a buddy, then make plans to see it

again (a must to see twice.... it's a whole different movie the next time around). If *The Matrix* blew your mind, this one will cripple it.

AMERICAN BEAUTY

Wonderfully acerbic and moving take on suburban living. It may not be a suburbia with which you are readily familiar but does that really matter? Kevin Spacey and Annette Benning don't register for a moment as a married couple which is one of the reasons this movie works.

THREE KINGS

For putting smarts and poetry back into the action-adventure movie. Will there ever be life after commercial tv for George Clooney, the

man who killed Batman?

THE SIXTH SENSE

This is the other scary flick released in the last decade (outside of *Meet the Deedles*, but that wasn't intentional). We also get to watch Bruce Willis finally learning that less is more. That's usually what happens when you've got a kid in the cast who at nine already can act rings around you.

THE THOMAS CROWN AFFAIR

Sexy, savvy and soigne remake of the overrated McQueen-McGraw potboiler. Looks like they spent two hundred million on sets and costumes alone and not a penny of it wasted. Russo and Brosnan actually made us believe they'd enjoy fucking one another.

BEING JOHN MALKOVICH

Despite the fact that it stars John Cusack and yes, that it really is about people walking around inside John Malkovich's head, this is a laugh riot. Malkovich deserves an Oscar of some sort for being such a good sport.

DOGMA

Even if this flick weren't a stink, which it most assuredly is, it would make the list for taking on Catholicism and all its apostate offshoots in such a breezy, self-assured manner. Not so surprisingly, Ben Affleck and Matt Damon are the least interesting things in this whole venture. Fortunately, they're not asked to do much more than act as pretty-boy straight men for real life funny men like George Carlin and Chris Rock. And, of course, Silent Bob and Jay.

BOYS DON'T CRY

Yup, this is the art film about the high school chick pretending to be a dude. Oz could talk all day about the various subtexts and the flicks curious mixture of lyricism and humor but fuck that and listen up dudes, you need to see this so you can learn what you already know to be true: women want the girl and the boy in their man.

Ok, that's it, you're probably already weeping and gnashing your teeth in violent disagreement. Like Ozzy cares! Read on, what follows is important . . .



DEEP CRIMSON

"My films have no audience and no commercial interests to serve," Arturo Ripstein, Mexico's leading filmmaker is fond of saying. If this flick is a typical Arturo production, Mr. Fide's must perform, reposit, "Ain't that the fucking truth," as this remake of the American cult fave, *The Honeymoon Killers* (1970) is one of the most turgid, pointless audacities He has had the misfortune to view in quite some time. Oz had great hopes for the film after discovering it came bearing three prizes from the 1996 Venice Film Festival including best screenplay and hosannahs from publications like the New York Times and Sight and Sound but they were quickly dashed by an overlong set-up filled with interminable long shots, histrionic acting, atrocious comic-romantic dialogue and ineffective lighting. From there it was one, slow ride, downhill. Downhill to nowhere. "It's a story about lovers who kill not about killers who become lovers," Mr. Ripstein explained to a film journalist. No, no

it's not; it's a film about nada that does nada and so is worth . . . nada (that's Mexican for caca).

(Video Vault)



not unlike an anus.

Now to play, you're hooked up to a cross between a fetus and a perogie by way of an umbilical cord, the phallic end of which is inserted into your "port." A sharp pain, then ecstasy. Think Mr. Cronenberg is in the process of working out a few psycho-sexual problems here, boys and girls? Alright, who gives a damn; but Oz mentions it only because it's the only interesting thing in a movie containing few surprises and fewer original ideas. Hell, Cronenberg's so desperate he even steals from himself. Purportedly working from original material for the first time since *Scanners* in 1983, *eXistenZ* finds this soi-disant visionary bereft of inspiration and unwilling to make even the smallest of compromises for the sake of lucidity and narrative cohesion. Those unfamiliar with Plato's "Dialogue of the Caves" and most of the Western literary cannon - read chronic dopers - may find the proceedings interesting; those still in the habit of using their library cards, however, are advised to avoid *eXistenZ* like the plague.

eXistenZ

Wondering what little Stevie Cronenberg's been up to since *Crash*, his adaptation of the epochal J.G. Ballard novel did just that upon release a few short years ago? Well, you may still end up wondering after watching this pretentious mess, a mindless study of the multi-leveled nature of reality disguised as a sci-fi horror film. Jennifer Jason Leigh sleepwalks her way through the embarrassing role of a godlike virtual reality game designer fleeing a nameless organization seeking to assassinate her. Why? Seems

her games hip everyone to the fact that reality bites (Duh!) and because they do, she must die. It gets sillier from here, folks, as Leigh, although sensing danger from all quarters, holes up in a resort cum research center with Jude Law, her corporate amanuensis, just so she can play with him. Unlike Jennifer and most of planet earth, though, Jude isn't wired so Leigh finds a renegade gas station attendant (William Dafoe) willing to make Jude's body electric. This involves the insertion of an electronic device called a "bioport" into the base of the spine which leaves a small opening in the back that with its dainty crenulations and sassy pink and light brown tones looks, well, looks



PUNISHMENT PARK

"C'mon people now, smile on your brother. Everyone get together and try to kill all the others right now." Yeah, brothers and sisters! Jessie Colin Young and peaceniks worst dystopian nightmare: the United States as run by Richard Milhouse Nixon. Executive orders gutting the Constitution and removing all rights to due process for anyone deemed subversive. That means long hairs, beardos, pacifists, feminists and, of course, all non-Stepin Fetchit type blacks. Yes, these threats to the American way of life are rounded up, sent to western deserts and given show trials wherein they are subsequently convicted and then given a choice: a lengthy prison sentence or *PUNISHMENT PARK*. "And just what the hell is that?" you say. Oz is glad you asked. At the hottest point of the day, when the temperature hits, oh say, 112 degrees or so, you and fifteen other radical conspirators have the handcuffs removed and are told to run. You've got three days to make three checkpoints in a trek totaling about seventy miles or so. In the desert. With no food or water. And you've only got a two hour head start before the police and the national guard start tracking you. They've got food and water. And

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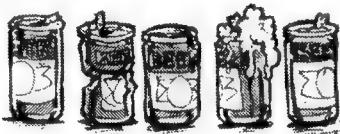
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cars. And helicopters. And guns. All kinds of guns. Tension builds as we cut from trial, to police interview, to the hunted. The film is mostly talk but because it's done as a documentary it works. That and the fact that we're dramatizing some pretty fundamental truths here. In and outside the tent, e.g., politics is about protecting money, the authority of government rests in its war powers, the real war is a class war. Oh yeah, in case you were wondering: nobody gets out alive. (Video Search of Miami)



BLAIR WITCH PROJECT

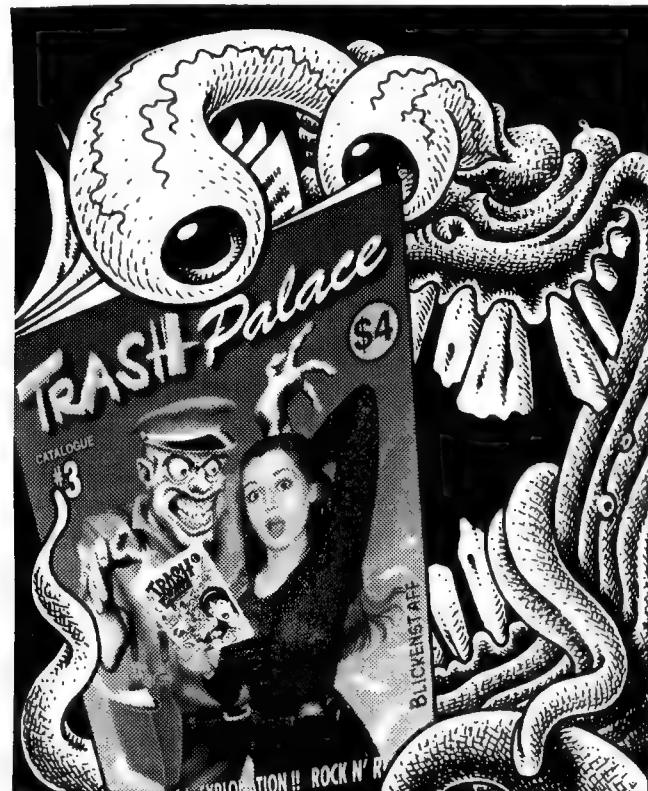
Or indisputable proof that our imaginations are a lot scarier than anything anyone can put up on the silver screen. Yes, Ozzy knows that the critical backlash that followed the film's commercial success kept you from plunking down ten dollars for a ticket, but that's your loss; as this tale of three twenty-

something slackers losing their way in a haunted forest while trying to film a documentary about a mythical broom-rider is one scary flick. And it's because of what's suggested not what is shown. That and the jerky, cinema verite camera work which lend this *Project* an air of authenticity. Normally, a masterpiece of understatement such as this would garner Mr. Fide's highest rating but Oz has to dock a can because he just can't believe that two exhausted, starving, badly frightened people would continue to keep the cameras running right up to their demise. What? Stop it. Stop the yelling. No, Ozzy hasn't ruined the movie for you, they tell you right off the bat that the feckless trio disappeared after taking off into the woods and that the undeveloped film was all that was found. So lighten up, rent the film, and get ready to be wowed at what can be done with amateur actors and a limited budget.



RAZOR BLADE SMILE

Direct from its record setting opening at Outfest '99, the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Film Festival! Rushed to video following a rapturous reception at Kink's Two's Rubber Ball, the U.K. fetish convention. Yes, it's *Razor Blade Smile*, a really really shitty, over-hyped horror film about a leather-loving dominatrix whiling away the centuries as a bloodsucking hitwoman. Critics found the filmmakers cinematic tricks - black and white flashbacks, unusual camera angles, flat, washed-out lighting - employed to disguise the impoverished budget, endearing but trust Ozzy here; it don't work. Curiously, the one thing we might expect to be unaffected by monetary considerations, the dialogue, is so self-consciously campy as to be unendurable. Someone, anyone, should have cut away just before our anti-heroine was allowed to archly address her putative audience with "Game, set and match" after killing two men on a tennis court. That's as good as it gets, save for the two or three scenes in which our deliciously lithe and cosmetically challenged vampiress doffs her clothes to revel in the preternatural curvaceousness of



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her sepulchral beauty.
(Video Vault)



digressions than anything else. Set design and lighting are quite impressive - Fulci toiled as an art critic before assayng a film career - but it's still a matter of being dressed up with nowhere to go.
(Video Vault)

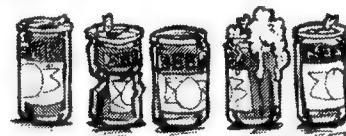
NEW GLADIATORS

Hack Italian director Lucio Fulci has managed to achieve a bit of cachet of late thanks to Quentin Tarantino's championing of the 1981 release, *The Beyond*. While that fitful reworking of *The Sentinel* had it's charms, this sci-fi flick is a hodge podge of half-baked ideas and wholesale appropriations. Set in the not-so-distant future where mega-corporations rule the world and keep its citizens doped on mega-doses of television violence, *New Gladiators* begins promisingly enough with a risibly cheesy biker battle in an outdoor arena but quickly bogs down when it throws its putative protagonist (no, not Fred Williamson who gets top billing here for a bit part) the winner of the aforementioned joust, into a futuristic prison. There we're treated to the latest innovations in torture and shock therapy and introduced to a parade of masculine clichés not-so-cleverly disguised as prison inmates. And that's about it folks. Oh there are some subplots designed to flesh things out but they're so poorly integrated into the narrative they seem more like



Findlay has a real feel for the sordid and her artless camera work puts you right in the middle of the sequences with her unwashed and slightly dazed characters.

Originally titled *Angel No. 9*, the movie supposedly achieved a certain notoriety when some lunkheaded critic broke the "news" that Roberta Findlay was actually the nom de reel of a man. A reasonable conclusion given *Angel's* gleeful misogyny and utter contempt for its putative audience.
(Video Search of Miami)

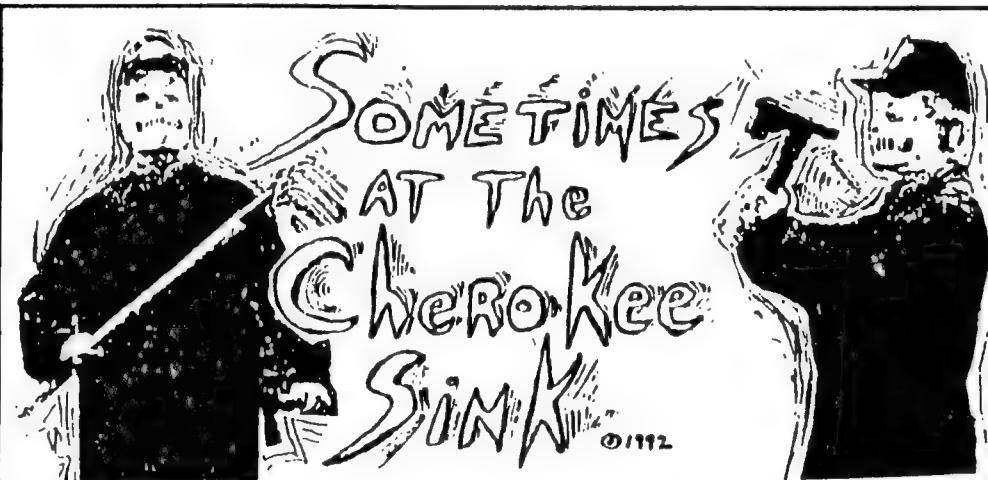


ANGEL ON FIRE

Roberta Findlay, beloved by cultists everywhere for the trio of films she made with her husband, Michael in the 60s: *The Touch of Her Flesh*, *The Curse of Her Flesh*, and *The Kiss of Her Flesh*. Demented flicks documenting the misadventures of a poorly-dressed psycho seeking ever new and inventive ways to murder hot looking young chicks. After splitting from her husband, Roberta moved into hardcore, and this nasty bit of business, first released in 1974, was her initial foray in the genre. Forget the absurd story of a misogynist sent back by heaven to live life as a woman, however, and get ready to get turned on by some really sleazy sex scenes. Especially noteworthy is a shower masturbation bit in which our heroine literally gets bent out of shape - "I love my new PINK skin" - whilst fingering herself. It works despite it's outlandishness because

SKULLFACE SATANIC VAMPIRE LOVERS BLOOD SUMMER

Ozzy thinks he's found the next Andy Milligan in the person of Floridian Matthew Samuel Smith. Here's a guy with virtually no financing who writes, produces, directs and edits one-take, super 8 mm horror films. Naturally, they're pretty crude but they've got lots of gore, female nudity (courtesy of some local strippers), and gratuitous violence. Throw in stilted acting, surreal dialogue and haphazard camera work and you've got... well, Mr. Fide isn't exactly sure what you've got but it is different and it is original and



Join Anthropology Professor Fontaine and his college students strange and deadly excursion into the deep Florida countryside, to investigate the mysterious fossil rocks being found in a freshwater sinkhole. Unexplained deaths, trailer park lifestyles, a satanic psychopath, progressive parties, young girls and boys on drugs - all will become a reality in this WILD, CAMPY, chiller - thriller and UNDERGROUND short feature from Director Matthew Samuel Smith. Filmed on Location in Florida

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Satanic Vampire Lovers: great crap on a broken shoe-string budget



somehow, despite himself, Oz found himself captivated. Especially by Smith's first shot on video attempt, *Blood Summer*, the creepy story of a young psycho's efforts to eliminate the deadbeat tenants of his dad's trailer park. We start off the shenanigan's with our anti-hero cutting off his thumb, presumably to work up his nerve, and then are treated to four brutal murders, one of which, involving a mutilation of a victim's decapitated head, will more than likely have you running for the bathroom. Add a hot shower scene with a barely of age gal, some psychedelic cinematography (exposed film, swirling graphics, quick zooms) and dialogue bearing little resemblance to anything you've ever heard or read, and you've got Brut cinema at its finest. Which doesn't necessarily equate with "good." Kudos also to Smith for the generally unsettling film score which he composed. No, Oz isn't making any of this up because he's bored; the man's been profiled in *Draculina*, *Headpress* and *Art Rag*, so maybe you should send twenty bucks Matt's way and find out what all the screaming's about. (M.S.S., 612 Florida Ave., Lynn Haven, FLA 32444)



EXORCISM

Pray for Ozzy, as he has seen a Jess Franco film and found it good. Verily, *Exorcism* hath spoken to him and revealed why it is that

Euro-trash is a genre like no other. For it appeals to man and woman's base desires while revealing truths seen rarely, and then as through a glass darkly. Son of Man, canst thou say or guess why it is that women readily acknowledge beauty in the form of woman yet men, seeing the same, are sore ashamed of this?

So much so that they rush headlong to engage in l'amour fou or to makest flicks like *Exorcism* which parade exquisite female forms only to subsequently work great evil upon them. Evil as in whippings and cuttings and eviscerations - payment for the loss of control, the unmaning caused by beauty's arousal. Adam desires Eve; but Eve, having tasted the fruit of knowledge, hath cast it down, finding it bitter. And why should she not, seeing that Adam is sore ashamed and canst not celebrate woman's most per-

fect shape. Franco hast given us all this in a parable in which a defrocked priest (Franco Himself) runs amok, torturing and then murdering lovely female faux-Satanists. How much more interesting this would have been had it been a nun stalking men; but women are made of sterner stuff, and thus have little interest in pursuing such mundane matters (Shocking Images).

ROMANCE



Oz believes Robert Altman called one of his recent films - *Short Cuts* or *Ready to Wear* - the movie for "men who like to look at pussy." If that's the case, then *Romance* is the movie for men who REALLY like to look at pussy . . . (such as Ozzy) . . . and penises, too, in a variety of flaccid and erect stages (which don't do much for Ozzy unless we're talking about she-males). The lead female character Marie (played by Caroline Trousselard) is, for some reason they never get around to hinting at, madly in love with Paul (Sagamore Stevenin), her boyfriend,

who refuses to have sex with her, despite her taking the matter into her own hands and mouth several times during the course of the movie.

While Marie still loves Paul and wants to have his babies, she won't sit still for the lack of sex and so proceeds to embark on all kinds of debauchery, including screwing a stranger she picks up at a bar (played by porno star Rocco Siffredi), being tied up by a dirty old man who claims to have bedded 10,000 women, engaging in oral and anal sex in the stair well of her apartment building with a complete stranger, and finally settling for a series of digital gynecological examinations by a group of pimply-faced medical students after somehow getting pregnant by the boyfriend



(don't ask!). Regarding the aforementioned stairwell scene, you just gotta love a flick with dialogue containing lines such as: "Now roll over and show me your rosebud!"; "Boy, I really reamed you out!"; and "I feel no shame in what we just did!": all pertaining to the anal sequence. Marie eventually kills the boyfriend, has the baby, and presumably lives happily ever after. Somewhere in this morass is, I'm sure, some kind of deep statement about power, sex, emotional spiritual life, etc. . . . but Oz could give a shit! He just enjoyed gazing at the nude wimmen and groovin' to all the hardcore sex!



PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Quick question for you film buffs: Would you remake *King Kong* and leave out the part about the ape climbing the tower and getting shot down at the end? Howza 'bout redoing *Citizen Kane* sans Rosebud? . . . Or maybe just shooting a porno flick without any money shots? I didn't think so! So how come Dario Argento remade *Phantom of the Opera* and left out perhaps the greatest scene in the history of horror moves: the unmasking of

the aforesaid Phantom? One reason - there's no need to do so is because here the Phantom is not disfigured . . . or even ugly, depending on your view of Julian Sands' face. Unlike previous versions, where the Phantom is either disfigured by fire or acid (the Claude Raines and

Hammer/Herbert

Lom versions), or just plain butt ugly (Lon Chaney's), this Phantom is a good-looking rascal, abandoned at birth, and raised underground by rats.

As in any Argento flick, we have lots of gruesome murders, along with the accompanying tons of blood and gore, including a scene where Sands bites a woman's tongue and pulls it right out of her head. Aside from this, it's business as usual: Phantom inhabits opera house; Phantom kills people; Phantom trains understudy singer; Phantom threatens prima donna; Phantom brings

"GENIUS!"
"POSSIBLY THE SEXIEST MOVIE EVER MADE!"
- Jaime Wolf, GEAR

"GROUNDBREAKING!"
For those who believe that movies are a proper place to explore the riddle of sex, no holds barred, this movie is *de rigueur*!
- David Anson, NEWSWEEK

"BRILLIANT!"
This movie begins where most art films leave off. Manages wholly and successfully to subvert the conventions of how sex is presented in the serious cinema.
- Richard Rayner, HARPER'S BAZAAR

ROMANCE
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TRINITY

www.tasterromance.com

down big opera house chandelier onto the crowd; Phantom kills some more; etc. And it's not done particularly well, either . . . AND no unmasking, goddammit! For a terror maestro Argento strikes out big time. (Video Vault)



-B

PREPARE FOR SONIC ASSAULT

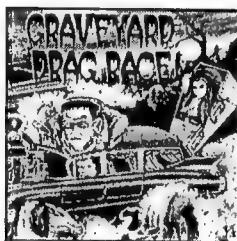
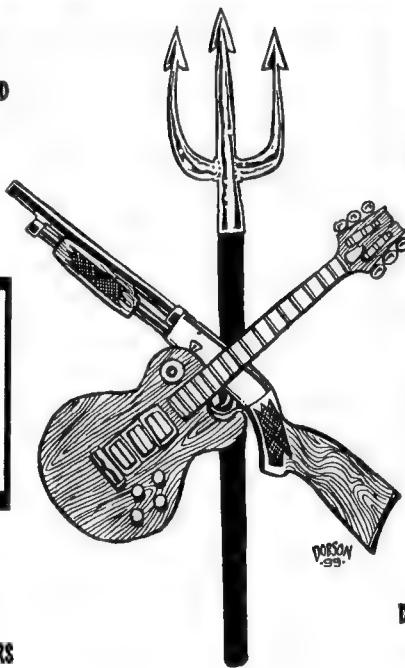


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THE AEROSOLS

The Aerosols
(Land of the Lost)

There's some serious retro simplicity at play here, with a lead-off tune consisting pretty much of one chord and the truth, plus a cluster of horns blatting like a hungover high school band. Half the time The Aerosols are channeling from circa '63, complete with cheesy organ and big surf reverb, but of course routed through a modern slacker ethos. The rest of the time they're routing that slacker ethos through a quart of cough syrup with extra codeine. Proof that it pays to read the fine print in the liner notes comes from the most entertaining thing here: "Special thanks to the 7th Day Adventists next door who taught us how to really hold electric guitars." Surely there's got to be a documentary in that somewhere.
bh

ANTHRAX

Return of the Killer A's
(BMG)

Somewhere between Metallica and Motley Crew lies the tuff turf of Anthrax. It's kind of an arena-rock metal thing with industrial flourishes, a sound that laid the groundwork for rapcore groups like Korn and Rage Against The Machine, cf. "I'm The Man" and "Bring The Noise." Cuts like this hold up; speedy metal crap like "Madhouse" and "Among The Living" certainly does not. Much of the fault for the early 80s work can be laid at the feet of lead singer Joey Belladonna whose shrill, histrionic vocals sound like he's passing a shovel through his anus. To be truthful, though, the riffage here is kinda lame as well which is probably the reason two of the cuts from this period are remixes by Al Jourgensen. Once we get into the 90s, however, the band gets positively evil - skull-

fucker riffs, lower register singing reeking of fire and brimstone, fiendishly clever arrangements. Yeah, as the band says, this collection of greatest whatzits is, among other things, a fairly definitive portrait of where Anthrax "was"; our only complaint is that there ain't enough of where the band went from there.
ds

APHRODITE

Aphrodite
(V2/Gee Street)

Music may indeed be the food of love but the innovative and incalculably entertaining bass and drum sounds of Aphrodite are unlikely to turn the listener's thoughts to romance. Or to thoughts of anything other than dance. Which is as it should be, as Aphrodite, aka Gavin King, began his professional career as a dj during the peak of England's Acid House movement. This eponymous debut, a collection of new compositions and 12" smashes, is a rather jaunty exercise and something of an exception in a genre tending toward the morose. While the skittery rhythms of much of Aphrodite are pure d&b, the sounds and samples woven around them derive from such diverse sources as hip hop, funk and bop jazz. Such eclecticism, combined with the playful arrangements, result in a most delightful melange; as listenable as it is danceable.
ds

AUTOBODY

Autobody
(Silly Bird)

If there were an Olympics for music, here would be the gold medalists for sheer goofy adventurousness. This one's actually a compilation culled from a slew of self-releases, but that has less to do with its rampant multiple personality disorder than the fact that

these four people are insane. And I mean that in the best possible way. This is noisy music for subversive, cheerfully evil cartoons drawn by people on moderately priced drugs. Structurally, the songs seem to have been wrapped in cheese-cloth, then pounded with hammers and reassembled from the wreckage. Everybody takes a turn at the mike, with one of them coming off the way that ultra-annoying twit from Cake actually should sound, and another like the illegitimate daughter of Kim Gordon and Maggie Estep, if only such a thing were, sigh, possible. I'm looking for something to complain about, but do you have any appreciation of how hard that is with songs with titles like "Black Hairy Tongue" and such subject matter as hot fly sex and the New York Port Authority bathroom?

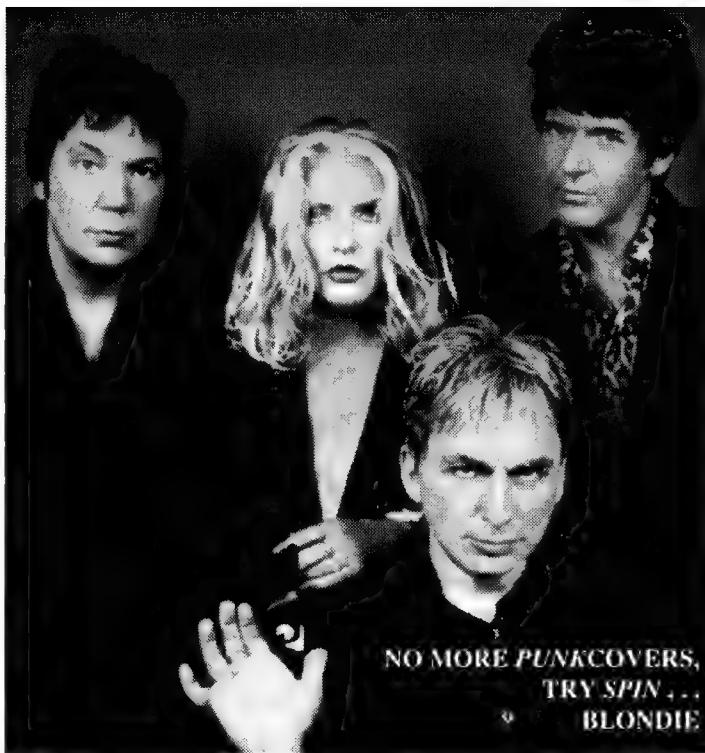
bh

THE BELMONT PLAYBOYS One Nite of Sin

These Playboys is red hot. Red hot! Which is good because you know most ersatz rockabillies ain't doodly squat. This one, though, has got this hard country

feel 'neath it all so don't be thrown by the liner notes pledgin' allegiance to metal gods AC/DC and Metallica. Or the fact that the introductory chords to "Enter Sandman" gets thrown in to the mix somewhere along the way. No sir! These boys may have grown up with that hard stuff but they were schooled by the likes of Link Wray, Paul Burlison, Scotty Moore and the like.

Primal rockers with moonshine in their veins and Appalachia in their hearts. They got a stand-up bassist for authenticity and add a horn or two for sensuality. So it swings honestly but, yup, that sax does make it sound a might sinful. This live collection contains a generous two dozen cuts - all but four are originals - and whether or not The Playboy's always play this well, all you have to know that on this particular night in Atlanta Georgia they set a fire that hasn't been seen or heard of since General Sherman marched through. That means, if you don't know you're history, that this disc is hot. Red hot... Red red hot... Not like those cinnamon beans you get at the movies but HOT like... [Ranter hospitalized at the Billy Lee Riley Home for the Terminally Hip] ds



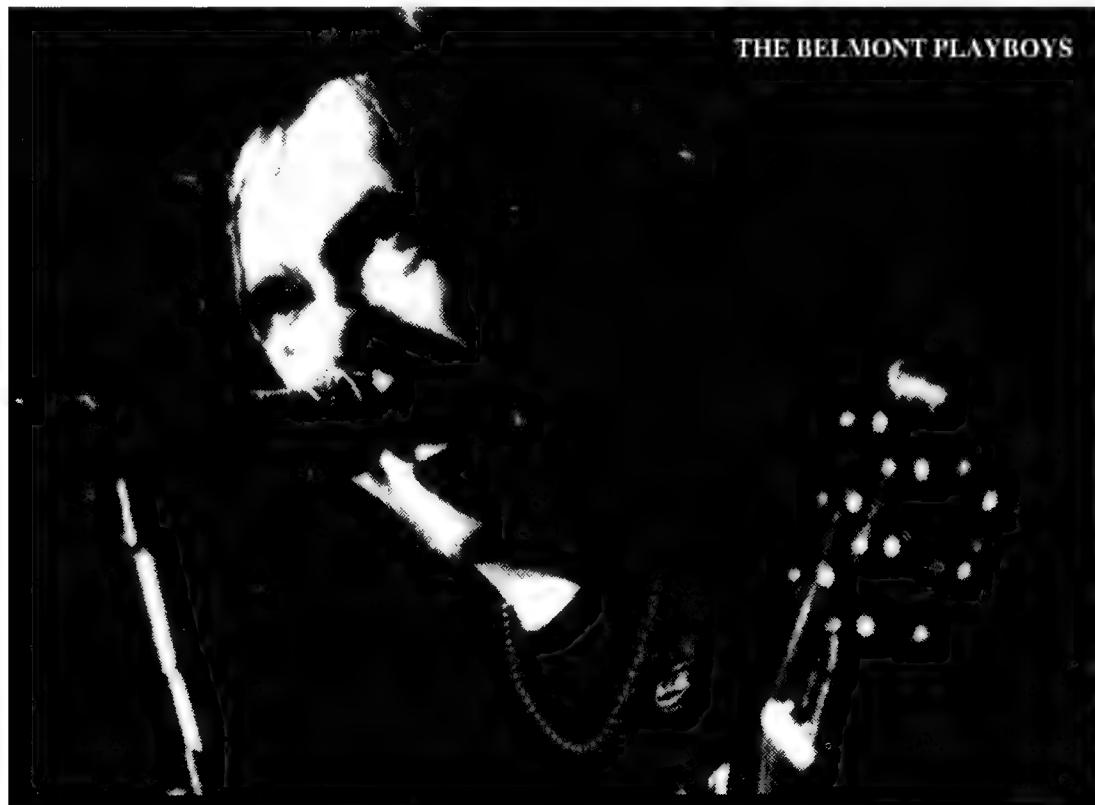
NO MORE PUNKCOVERS,
TRY SPIN...
BLONDIE

BLONDIE
Live
(BMG)

N'OK, a bit of revisionist history for the two of you who still care: Blondie aka Debbie Harry and boy-toy, Chris Stein released a delightful piece of plastic at the genesis of the nouvelle vague featuring a sardonic punk take

on 60s Brill Building sound. Thereafter, despite the band's enormous commercial success, it was pretty much all downhill. A few fitfully interesting 45s here and there, e.g., "Call Me," "The Tide is High," and then a slow fade into obscurity. Last year, the group reformed for some unearthly reason, released a dreadful disc and somehow managed to wrangle a number-one-selling single out of the deal. Striking while the iron is hot, BMG has seen fit to issue this live set, a collection of tepid, streamlined performances of "greatest hits" for the masses, i.e., those who buy Shania Twain and Britney Spears discs. In other words, children. Can you spell "irrelevant" boys and girls? ds

THE BELMONT PLAYBOYS



THE CLASH From Here to Eternity (Epic/Legacy)

At least seventeen years overdue, *Eternity* attempts the impossible: trying to capture the five year (1977-82) history of the ragin' force that was El Clash combo on stage in seventeen tracks. Raw, sloppy and altogether incendiary, the Clash on a good night were among the finest live rock bands ever. Unfortunately, too many of the

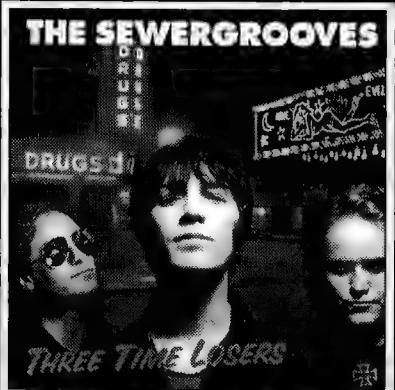
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THE CLASH: UNFORTUNATELY ETERNITY IS MISSING EL TOPO HEADONISTIC



takes chosen for *Eternity* show them past their peak, i.e., in 1982 following the firing of ace drummer Topper Headon. While there are glimpses of their full fury (e.g., "What's My Name?", "City of the Dead," and "Capital Radio"), there are too many subpar later versions of vintage faves (e.g., "Clash City Rockers" and "Career Opportunities") to make this set definitive.

df

DANCE HALL CRASHERS

Purr
(Pink & Black)

Happy, uplifting punk - okay, so it seems like an oxymoron, but here it is, just the same, courtesy of the occasional ska influence and the ebullient nature of the not one, but two, female singers who front this fivesome. They're ever so accomplished when it comes to being snide, in lyrics usually directed at weasels from former relationships, or just weasels of either gender who generally exist to the chagrin of the rest of us. For years I've resisted referring to music as infectious, but now I find I really, really, really want to. Must . . . be . . . strong . . .

bh

DEAD BOYS 3rd Generation Nation (Rude)

After cutting an all-time punk rock classic first album, *Young, Loud, and Snotty* on Sire Records in 1977, the Cleveland-based Dead Boys suffered a horrifying sophomore jinx with their second LP, *We Have Come For Your Children* (1978 also on Sire). Produced by Felix Pappalardi, *Children*, while chock full of more-than-decent tunes (as proven by the BD's in later live performances and albums), suffered from apparently sluggish performances by the band, as well as a flat, unexciting, way-too-cleanly produced sound

Well . . . finally, the pre-mix tapes of the Pappalardi mess emerge from hibernation, and released with the title shown above. This proves, at least to these ears, that maybe 80% of the problems with the second platter were caused by Pappalardi's fucked-up production. Obviously, Felix P. used to producing Cream and Mountain and the like, had no clue as to how to capture the furious sound of this band in the studio - or maybe just didn't care. There's a world of difference, sound-wise, between

my old vinyl copy of *Children* and this noisier, thrasher pre-mix CD version. There was definitely a decent album's worth of tunes AND performances cut here . . . no, it still ain't the first LP, but it's not chopped liver, either. Cheetah Chrome's liner notes suggest that the producer was spending more time doing drugs than worrying about the results of this record. While Pappalardi's wife and writing partner Gail Collins shot and killed him several years later (I forget why - did she catch him in bed with Leslie West, maybe?), perhaps Stiv, Cheetah & Co. had a good reason here for justifiable homicide.

jo

DYKE & THE BLAZERS Funky Broadway (Collectibles)

An album of re-released 60s soul and dance music - that, for once, ain't the smooth pop sound of Motown; it ain't the metronomic, precise syncopated backbeat of James Brown; and it ain't the Booker T & The MG's-and-a-horn-section-driven, tight-as-a-snaredrum-head powerhouse sound of Stax, Volt and Memphis. This is greasy, heavily pomaded, funky, dirtiness from

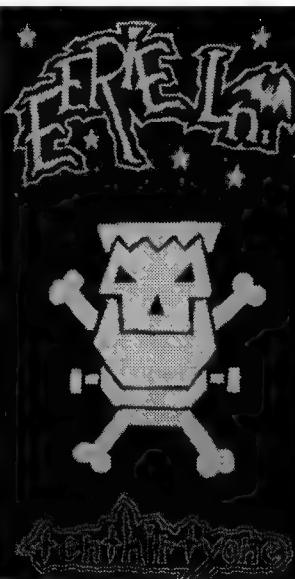
Phoenix. The Blazers, including one Arlester "Dyke" Christian on bass, were the backing group for the Buffalo, NY based O'Jays in the mid sixties, until, one night in 1965, they were left stranded in Phoenix, when the O'Jays lacked sufficient bread to pay for their trip back to the East Coast. In an attempt to raise the financial wherewithal to return home, the band started doing gigs, with Mr. Christian now on lead vocals. In addition, Mr. C had been writing rather prolifically while on the road, and soon had a large repertoire of originals - among them, "Funky Broadway" (their first single, released in '66, later covered by Wilson Pickett which went on to achieve greater fame), "So Sharp" (covered by J. Geils Band), "Uhh" (first song on Bobby Radcliffe's Black Top debut album), "We Got More Soul," "Let A Woman Be A Woman, Let A Man Be A Man," several other dance delights ("Funky Walk," "Broadway Combination," "Funky Bull," and the "Wobble"), and the hilarious, over ten minute opus, "The Wrong House" . . . all of which are included on this compilation. Most of the above were regional hit 45s in the 60s, with a few hitting the Billboard charts nationally. They are all worth having - as stated above, this is not the slick-sounding soul sounds created by high-priced studio musicians from Detroit or Memphis or Muscle Shoals. This is honest, gritty music that plays like something recorded by a bunch of tired, liquored-up musicians at 4 AM after finishing their three sets in a smoke-filled club earlier that night. Dyke, while technically no great shakes as a singer, gets his damn points across, usually in the same key the band's playing, said band is usually on time; and you WILL shake your ass and move your feet listening to this! (NOTE/EPILOGUE - Dyke was shot and killed outside a Phoenix bar in March 1971, at the age of 28, by an unknown assailant. This is the principal reason you hardly ever hear of him or his band.)

jo

58

**EERIE LN.
Ten-Thirty-One
(We Glow In The Dark)**

Hmmmm . . . Let's see heah-uh . . . Ten-Thirty-One . . . That'd be October 31st . . . And that'd be Halloween . . . Open up the packet and we got band members with names like Goredog and Boo. Dressed up like ghouls, too. Singing songs titled:



"Skull-O-Mania," "Tomb of Blood" and . . . OK, OK, we get it, these little monsters want to be the new Misfits! But the band's from Texas. And what do they know from the Misfits in Texas? Not that Goredog & Co. sound much like our brethren from New Jersey. Hell no, they're way too heavy. Singer's hoarse shouting is closer to Lemmy than Danzig's croon, too. Still, this rocks hard, keeps it tongue firmly in check - 'cept for "God Hand," a creepy ditty 'bout the power and the glory of shooting folks - and plays with devilish, raucous abandon. "Raucous," that's Texan for "smokin'."

ds

**FAMOUS MONSTERS
Around The World
(Estrus)**

OK, we get a press release from Count Chockula or Gore de Vol or somebody or other about these hot-looking man-eaters on a Transylvanian tour playing ghoul rock and refusing to appear, despite the frigid weather, in anything other than bikinis.

This kind of thing is usually a clear sign that said band is little more than a novelty act. Which Famous Monsters assuredly are, which is interesting since this trio is led by former White Zombie bassist Sean Yseult. Still, there's something about amateurishly performed surf punctuated by girlish shrieks that's rather endearing. Especially when it's played with

such sleazy insouciance. And nearly naked.

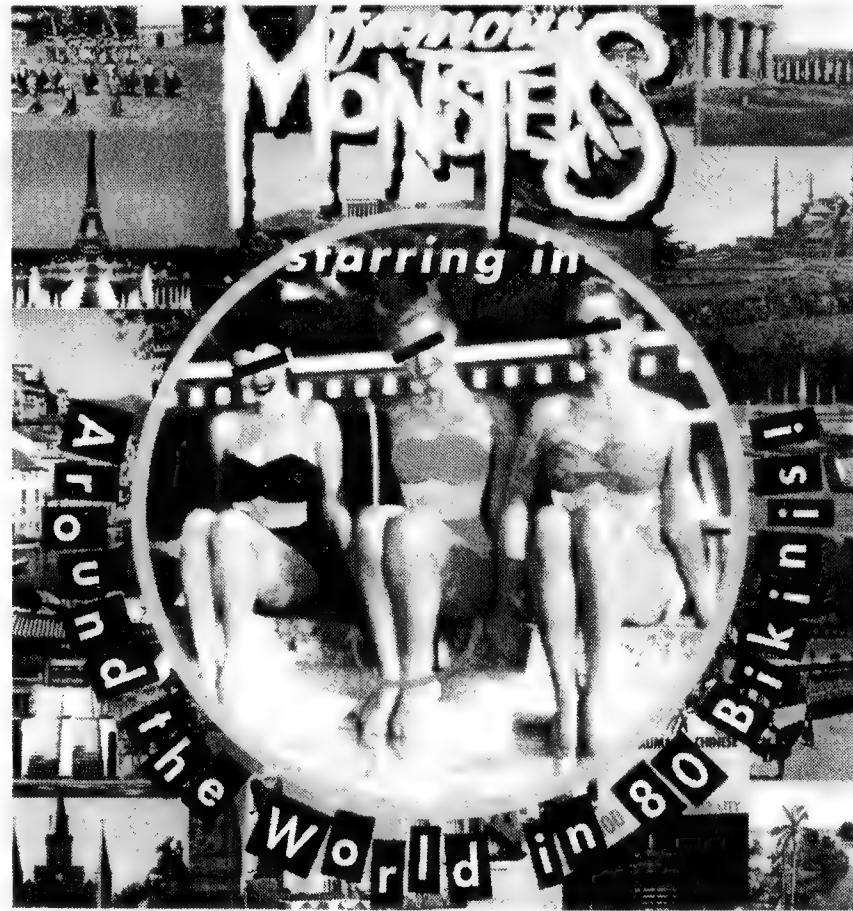
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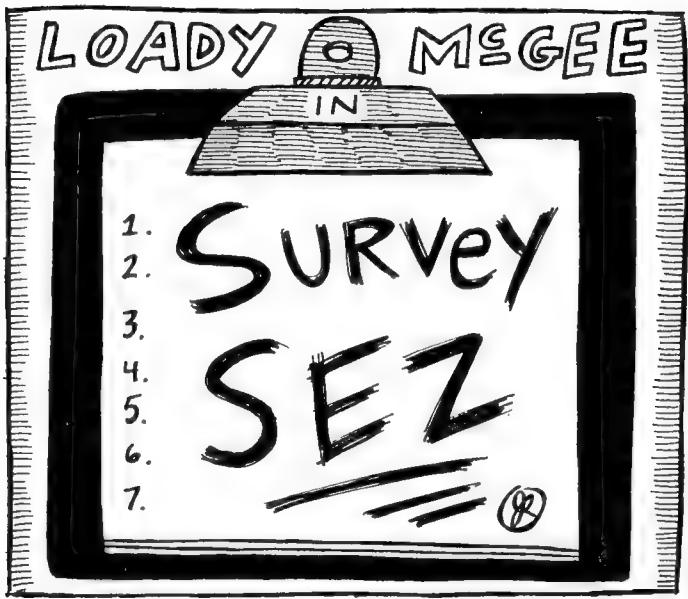
**GEORGE JONES
Live With the Possum
(Asylum)**

Ever since the ole Possum got all likkered up and drove his RV off that bridge earlier in '98, resulting in a prolonged Intensive Care Unit stay wherein all sorts of tubes and gizmos were shoved down his throat for several weeks, the question has been - will he still have THE VOICE? Will he still be able to take the Hendersonville, Tennessee phone book and sing the contents and make it sound great? I was hoping the answer would be forthcoming on this here live stereo high-fidelity recording, but no such luck . . . this show appears to be from about 1993 or so . . . as a matter of fact, the whole shebang from whence this material was pulled was released on video tape several years ago. Yes, it's a very good live show - GJ is in great

ABOVE: SPOOOOKY!

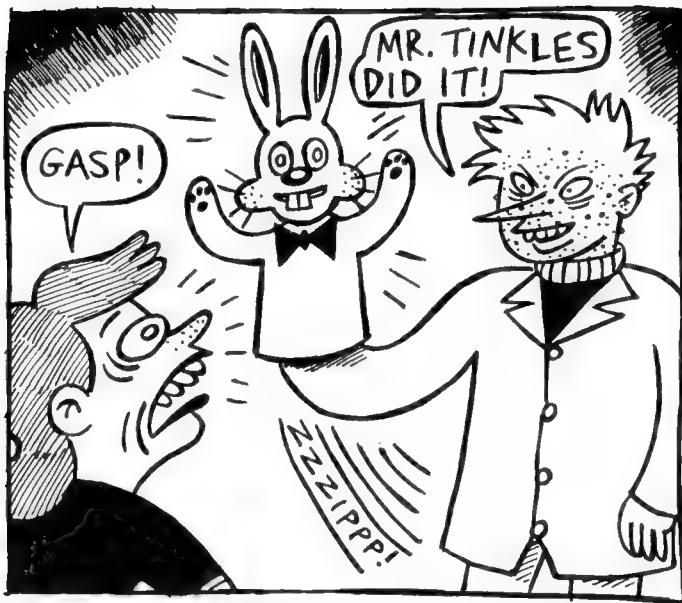
BELOW: SPOOOOKY BUT SEXY!!



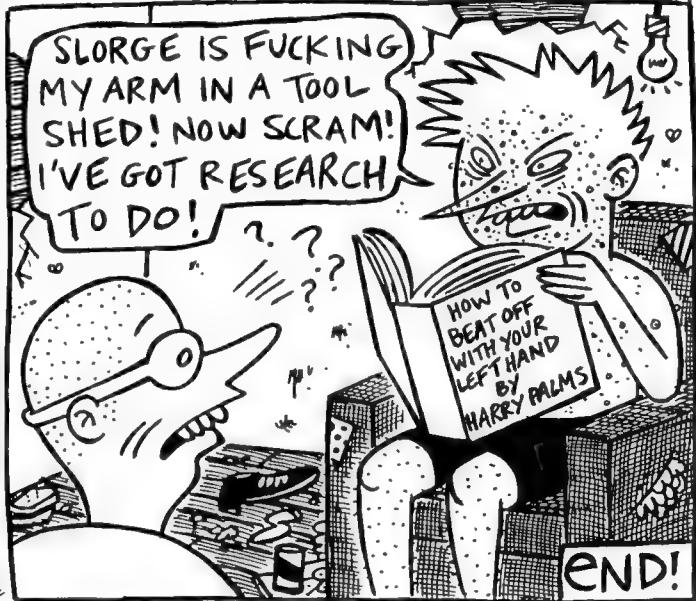




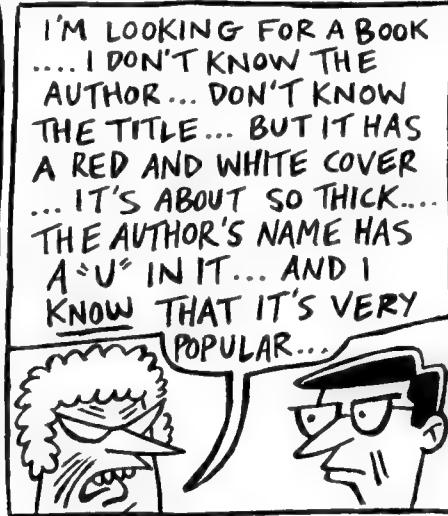
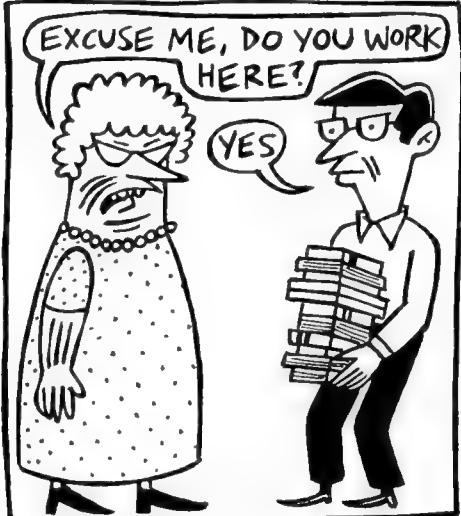








BoOkStOrE w/SeGuY by J. Jerk



voice throughout . . . but what's the damn point, Asylum? Don't you have any more recent live shows on tape? I'd personally love to hear live versions of his best material, from *Cold, Hard Truth* (his Asylum) debut, or maybe his later MCA stuff (including perhaps one of the greatest pure country singles ever, "Wild Irish Rose" - it's got everything - lyrics about returning war vet, drinking, insanity, living on the street, estranged wife & child, and cheap wine . . . THAT's C&W!). You probably would too, so leave this damn thang alone.

JO

PAUL "WINE" JONES
Pucker Up Buttercup
(Fat Possum)

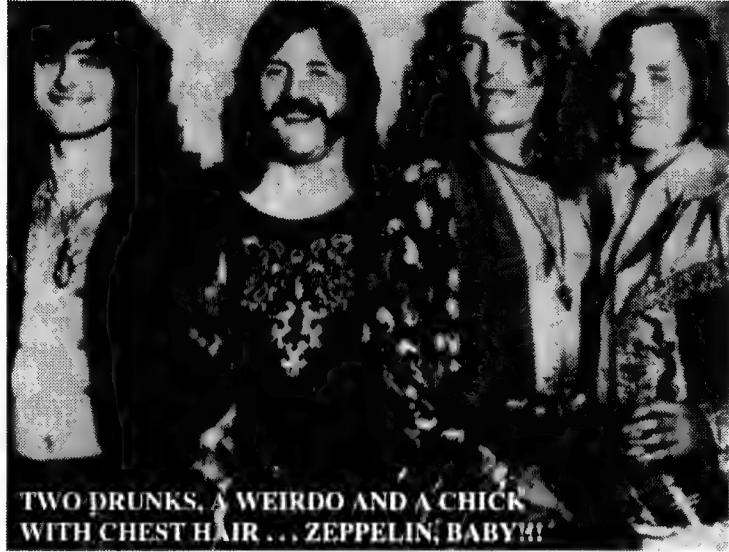
For some inexplicable reason, Mr. Jones has dropped the nickname "Wine" on this, his second Fat Possum release. Not to worry, I put it back in for this review - it fits him like a glove. How can I best describe the music on this new album? The

only way Mr. Jones sound could get any rawer is if the CD bled when you took it out of its case . . . or maybe if the record store selling this gave a way a free pound of raw hamburger when you purchased the disc. Paul's guitar is turned up to the point of listener damage, the drummer pounds away seemingly oblivious to whatever else is going on in each song; and Mr. Jones himself whoops, yells, and belts it out in his best field holler. Is the title track the same song as recorded by Junior Walker several decades ago? I don't know; and I can't tell! This makes Hound Dog Taylor sound like King Crimson . . . buy *Pucker Up*, you'll like it.

JO

LED ZEPPELIN
The Best of Led Zeppelin, Vol. 1: The Early Years
(Atlantic)

After you've gotten it right the first time, have the good sense to leave well enough alone. Nine years after the definitive



TWO DRUNKS, A WEIRDO AND A CHICK WITH CHEST HAIR . . . ZEPPELIN, BABY!!!

Led Zeppelin box set, we get this tackily-packaged unimaginative-paced single disc of highlights of tracks from the first four Zep albums. That it includes said highlights is probably enough of a lure for the dull masses, but consider the following: While the box was tastefully packaged and resequenced tracks to give a whole new appreciation for them, Early Years features a ghastly cover shot of the four Zep mem-

bers in astronaut suits and follows almost a straight chronological album sequence. The remastering doesn't improve on the box set sound by much, and the lip-synch video of "Communication Breakdown" hardly justifies the expense. And a second platter of this ilk is planned! Save your money! Or how about putting out a definitive set of latter year live Zep? df

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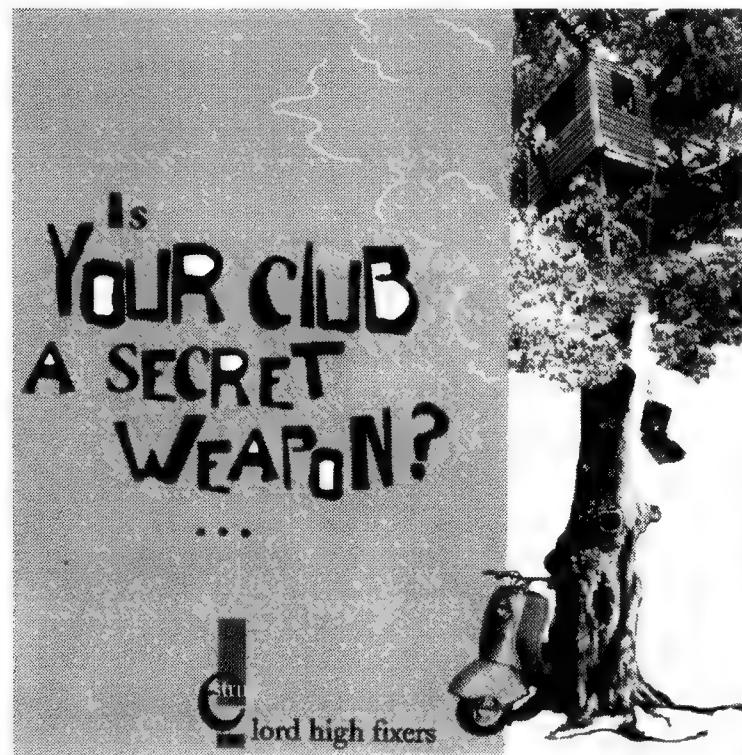
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SUICIDAL RECORDS

LORD HIGH FIXERS
Is Your Club A Secret Weapon?
(Estrus)

Well, kick out the jams, mother-fuckers! A revolutionary garage psychedelic rock composition for five pieces. Also for restless, alcoholic, "Hey-where's-the-party" type intellectuals. For the times when r&r just isn't enough.



So slap this on your carousel, let your freak flag fly brothers and sisters and get down with the inspiration words of Little Bobby Dylan, Eldridge Cleaver, Gil Scott Herron, et al. Which isn't nearly as pretentious as it sounds, my children, as these Lords also betray the influence of intellectual jazzbos like Archie Shepp and Pharaoh Sanders. Or so The Fixers say. What do we know? Sure, we listen to Shepp and Sanders; but only late at night. Late at night after having ingesting massive quantities of liquor and having taken a couple dozen bong hits. The point here - is there a point here? - is that the quintet understand how simplistic, how limiting rock and roll structures sound to the average musically educated ear; thus they've taken care to decorate almost every bar of music with interesting bits of noise, instrumental solo interferences,

bits of poetry and the like. Composers, man, not songwriters, that's what we're getting at here, me brethren. To better understand what we're talking about, start with The Fixers' deconstructionist takes on The Byrds' "You're On My Mind" and Alice Cooper's "Eighteen" and then hit "arbitrary" on the disc player.

ds

who refuse to recognize them as truly The Misfits. Personally - while I agree that they seem to miss Mr. Danzig's skills at writing very catch sing-a-long pop songs with nasty lyrics and trillions of hooks, the new guys are STILL one tremendous powerhouse of a band, both live and in the studio. The new kid singer, Mychael Graves, is perfect for their material - both old and new. To me, the majority of *American Psycho* stands up to most of their Danzig-era material, and I'm also starting to feel that way about the new one - *Famous Monsters*. The hooks ARE there - it just takes a few more listens than it used to. One song in particular, "Saturday Night," sounds like nothing they've ever done - a 50s kind of ballad - and I'd love to hear more in this vein. Like this or not - in my opinion, it beats what Danzing's now doing all to Hell (with his pipes, WHY does he need to put his voice through that cheese grater or synthesizer or whatever the fuck he calls it???).

jo

THE NECKBONES
The Lights Are Getting Dim
(Fat Possum)

Lights must've been dim when these boys signed their recording contracts as they definitely do not sound like the alcoholic 65-year old bluesmen that make up the bulk of the Fat Possum label. Sure Epitaph helps distribute a lot of Possum's stuff and the Epitaph trademark often appears alongside the Possum trademark on recordings and press releases but boys, you've got to pay attention when signing legal documents. Still, inking to a blues label was not a total case of misadventure as The Neckbones are from Mississippi and they do play the blues. Well, more like blues damage which, loosely translated, is hard rock performed messily, clangorously and almost rhythmically. With blues touches. Sometimes with more than a touch as on the vampy take of T-Model Ford's "Nobody Gets Me Down." Sometimes with no touches as on the sloppy, infectious riff rock-

MISFITS
Famous Monsters
(roadrunner)

Perhaps the biggest stink I ever saw raised on the Internet (aside, of course, from World Championship Wrestling's mistreatment of Ric Flair in early '99 - resulting in his placing #1 in numerous polls having to do with "Most Beautiful People," "Man of the Century," etc.) was Jerry Only's (and brother Doyle's) decision to resurrect The Misfits, sans Glen Danzig, about fifteen years after they officially died (or were put to death). Their comeback album, *American Psycho*, was either passionately loved or violently reviled in debates and discussions all over the board. In spite of the fact that the new Misfits are a going concern, having released two albums, and toured several times throughout the world, there are still those



YEARBOOK PHOTOS WERE ALWAYS A DRAMA WITH THAT JERRY ONLY KID... THE MISFITS WON'T GO AWAY

THINGS... Aaron Warner & Linc Polderman



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er, "Good Bye Ramona," a song the NY Dolls would've been proud to call their own. Heck, they even put a fiddle and a mandolin on the closer, "Red Wagon," for a dirgy bluegrass number just to show that cack-handedness is an aesthetic strategy. Kind of spoils the illusion of drunken abandon but since it's the last song on the record you can hit eject without feeling like you're doing yourself a disservice.

ds

NIGHTWALKER
In Shop We Build Electric Chairs
(Rockathon)

Don't let the title fool you: *Shop* is the dregs of Guided by Voices' leader Robert Pollard's tank. It's the failed experiments, drunken jams and other esoterica that Pollard had left on the cutting room floor for years and should have left there. Some things just don't deserve to see the light of day. *Shop* is full of such things.

Even rabid GbV fans will find this execrable.
df

RED STARS THEORY
Life In A Bubble Can Be Beautiful
(Touch & Go)

Just about everything these folks do right is showcased in the very first track, "How Did This Room Get So White," an instrumental with lots of guitars abrading against one another, soaked in effects and drenching everything in sight in atmosphere. In fact, vocals take a back seat throughout most of this disc, and whenever they're there, and usually when they aren't, the results aren't unlike what was once upon a time called shoegazer music. I don't know how much of a typical live set the Red Stars spend contemplating their Nikes, although for all the sparkle, fuzz, and phase shifting, there's a definite cerebral, introspective vibe going on. But then, whenever you have a violin weaving throughout, it's about as reliable a tip-off as any that what you've got is music targeted at the head rather than the crotch.

bh

THE SILENCERS
Cyclerific Sounds
(Bomp)

With its fuzzed-out sound, hopped-up melodies and tom-tom percussives, it would be easy to mistake *Cyclerific Sounds* for a Dave Allan record. In fact, one of Allan's signature tunes, "Devil's Angel's Theme," is given the full treatment here; and thanks is given to the Great One himself in the liner notes. So pardon us if we file this under "A." Not only for Allan, but as in "A" for effort. Not to mention the "excellence of execution" - the guitars, despite the distortion, cut like a scalpel, the rhythms go up and down and down and up, beating an insistent tattoo upon the brain, the bass a soothing anodyne for the

primitive impulses loosed by the savage but studied attack on our senses. *Cyclerific* takes the listener down an oft traveled rode but it's a helluva ride none the less.

ds

THE SOFTS

1901
(Silly Bird)

And it starts with such promise, too: Jangly guitars coalescing into bold, stroll-tempo riffs brimming over with confidence . . . but then Robert McNeill has to open his mouth and spoil the mood with one of the flattest, most wobbly voices since William Burroughs creaked out "Come On In, Take Off Your Skin" on Tom Waits' *The Black Rider*. To be fair, it sorta grows on you by the time the disc is over, all whopping 31 minutes of it, mostly because of the band's quick, smart, stripped-down indiepop approach and the skewed appeal of the frequently weird lyrics ("I would die today if I could, but the Lord just won't take me . . ."). Buy this. Buy this now. The sooner they get the royalties, the sooner they can spring for two weeks' worth of singing lessons for Robert. bh

SON VOLT
Wide Swing Tremolo
(Warner Bros.)

Music for a cross country journey. With a busted marriage in the rear view mirror perhaps. Lyrics deserving of a proper listen, asking you to dig for the nuance. The sound not really fast or twitchy; more DRIVING than anything else. Good solid feel to this construction, like a '63 Pontiac. A bit Southern with some of the options but not country or anything or even CDB. The cuts slow down as the thing cycles through but even that adds to the appeal in a lonesome sort of way. In short, *Wide Swing* is one of those uncommon releases which seems to improve with each and every play.

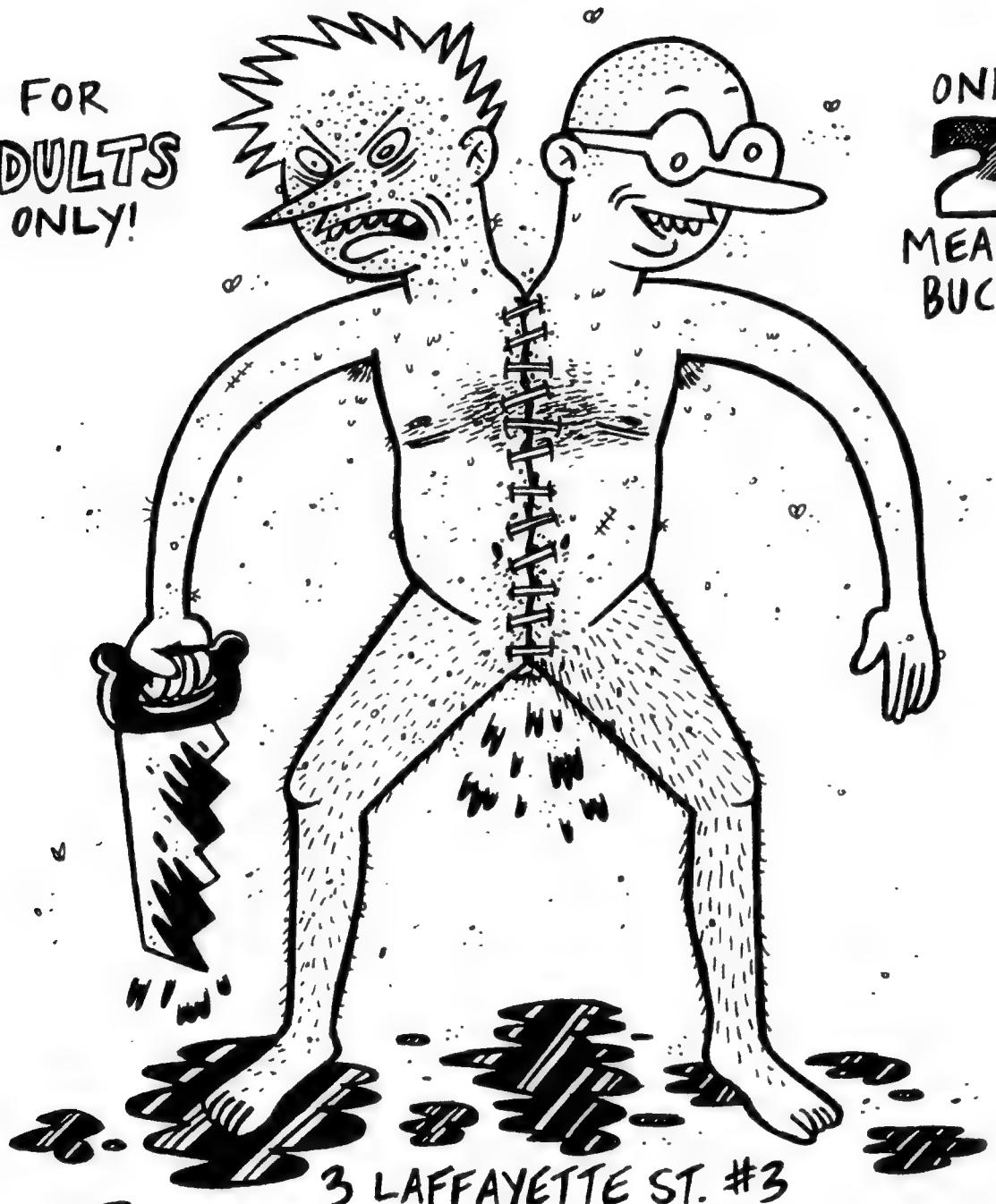
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**JOE STRUMMER AND THE
MESCALEROS**
Rock Art and the X-ray Style
(Hellcat)

While Joe Strummer hasn't been entirely invisible since the Clash's demise, *Rock Art* is his first real solo album in a decade. Rather than rocking out, the disc updates the multi-cultural dabbling of *Sandanista*. The songs range from neo-reggae ("Tony Adams") to techno ("Yalla Yalla"). While "Willesden to Cricklewood" is downright pretty, "Nitcomb" crosses the line into sappiness. "Techno D-day," however, makes it clear that Strummer hasn't lost his righteous anger entirely. Though a significant improvement over his 1989 album, *Earthquake Weather*, *Rock Art* doesn't exactly reestablish Strummer as a relevant artist. df

THE TASTIES
Shy Down Girl
(Rockathon)

The Tasties are best noted for their big noisy guitar backing of Robert Pollard on his recent *Lexo and the Leapers* EP. On their own, the band make pleasantly melodic noise with a healthy dose of distortion. With more polished production, a few of these tracks could be hits. As is, they're a whole lot better than whatever passes for modern rock radio.

df

TKO Records Sampler
Punch Drunk
(TKO)

It's very difficult for me to sit down and listen to many of these damn samplers from start to finish. There's usually a fairly high percentage of tunes that make me stop and wonder how many of the bands ever got signed in the first place? . . . Although if it's a sampler for just one label's product, there, of course, is the answer! The latest such effort from TKO Records out of San Francisco, on the other hand, actually makes me want to go out and investigate some of the full-length releases by their acts.



While the basic sound and fury of many of these combos is very similar - we're talking a hard-edged punk/oi type of music here, with a whole heap of old Clash/Business influences - most cuts, to these ears at least, stand up to repeated listenings. The groups range from real old-timers (Peter & The Test Tube Babies) to bands who've been around for several years (Dropkick Murphys, Swingin' Utters, Workin' Stiffs, Electric Frankenstein, here an EF 2000 cut) to relative newcomers (Loose Lips). Good sounds for head-banging or getting in your car and driving very aggressively. jo

Various
Don't Tread On Me
(Butcher's Wig)

Ambitious attempt by a tiny record company to foist their poorly-selling singles on an unsuspecting public. A catalogue raisonne, if you will, of short works by the likes of Speedball Baby, Mono Men, The Woggles and Brutarian faves, The Psyclone Rangers who we thought had broken up as Jon Valania, their guiding light had taken to running around the country cobbling together interviews with big-timers so big (Tom Waits, Jon Spencer) - you have to sign release forms before even

daring to tell your mother that you had been assigned to interview them. Taking time from his busy schedule, Jon threw this comp together, something akin to a state of the art pronouncement on garage noise damage. Much as we hate to say it, because Jon owes us money, *Don't Tread On Me* is something you need. If you find yourself troubled after purchase, look to Valania's liner notes, he'll give you the "why" and make you feel guilty for not getting it the first time through. ds

price. Twenty-two bands, twenty-eight cuts and, at the risk of sounding like an idiot, there isn't a loser in the bunch. The three or four rockabilly exercises may sound a bit too clean for those weaned on Presley and Sun but the rest of this stuff, which runs the gamut from art-damage punk to classic 70s smoothness, est quelle choice. Just make sure you follow the instructions - turn volume all the way up, consume one six-pack of PRB - before diving in. ds



Various
Ultra Swank:
Cacophony Records
Sound Action
Sampler 1999
(Cacophony)

The question is: are the Brothers Cacophony (Kip and Caca) insane? Right! You don't care. I don't care. Nobody cares, really, but the Brothers want to know so their asking. They care what you think. They want you to like them. They want you to buy more stuff from their record company so they can move out of their parent's basement. That's probably the reason the Bros are selling this boss comp at a ridiculously cheap

Various

Ya Gotta Have Moxie Vol. 2
(Bomp/Alive)

Puts to rout forever the propagated notion that all the worthwhile garage rock has long since been mined and subsequently refined via the Nuggets and Pebbles series. Although at first blush, one would not think that an overweight eccentric pack rat (the founder and sole proprietor of Moxie music) capable of turning up anything worthwhile in this or any musical genre. For, as we all know, overweight, eccentric pack rats do not like music.

They like Star Trek and pornography. And junk food. Not this guy. He understood the difference between mere imitators of The Rolling Stones, The Pretty Things, The Beatles, et al., and honest-to-God naifs. Talent, sure, but also an imperceptible belief that that which was being waxed was somehow important and therefore likely to endure. The names - Eggheads, Livin' End, Perils - are long forgotten outside a small circle of record collectors; still, pop this damaged chunk of plastic, because rock so lacking in menace or swagger or sexuality is endlessly listenable; as is always the case with the wrong being oh so right.
ds

YES

The Ladder
(Beyond)

More than twenty-five years after their prog-rock heyday, Yes has become like Spinal Tap: their audience hasn't become smaller; it has become more selective. *The Ladder* features four members from Yes' mid-70s lineup, and none of the eleven songs runs longer than ten minutes. They even updated their sound with some drum loops and a horn section on one track. But does anyone care anymore? df



ZEN GUERRILLA

Trance States in Tongues
(Sub Pop)

We're told Zen Guerrilla sounds like Throbbing Gristle crossed with Lightnin' Hopkins and strange as that may sound, at one time, that might have been apt. And not too terribly interesting . . . Well, we're here to tell you, gentle reader, that description is no longer apt and that this is Motor City madness stuffed to the gills with distorted guitars, below voice smothered in echo and reverb and hot bass and drum interplay keeping time time time

in a kind of manic straightforward line while all about others are losing their head and looking to put the blame on somebody or other. Noisy, riff-happy, mad to live, mad to play, mad to perform; *Trance States* speaks to us in language totally skewed yet nonetheless pleasing for all that and puts to rest the notion that the deliberately thoughtless pursuit of crude impulses leads only to witless banality.
ds

ZODIAC KILLERS

The Most Thrilling Experience

(Rip-Off)

THE METROS

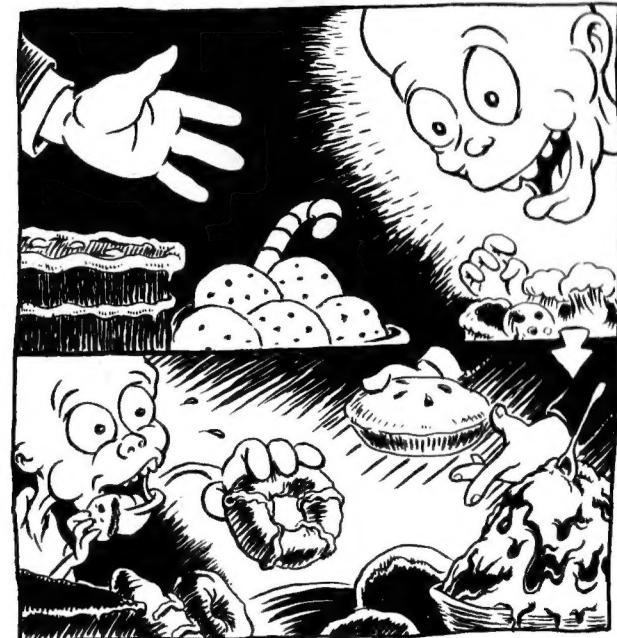
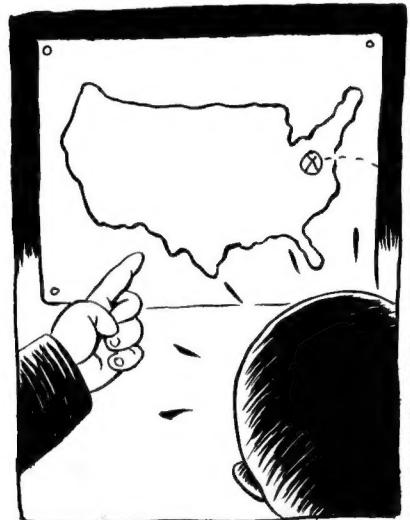
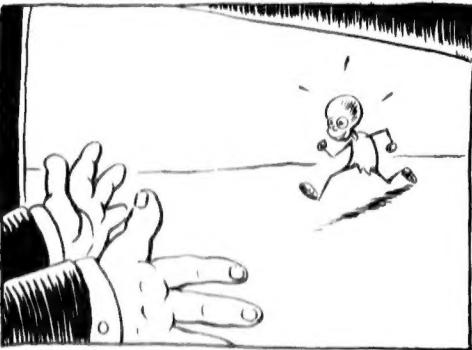
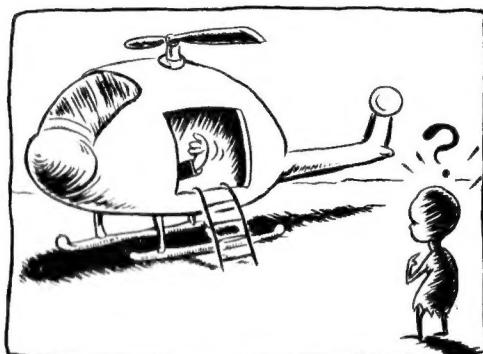
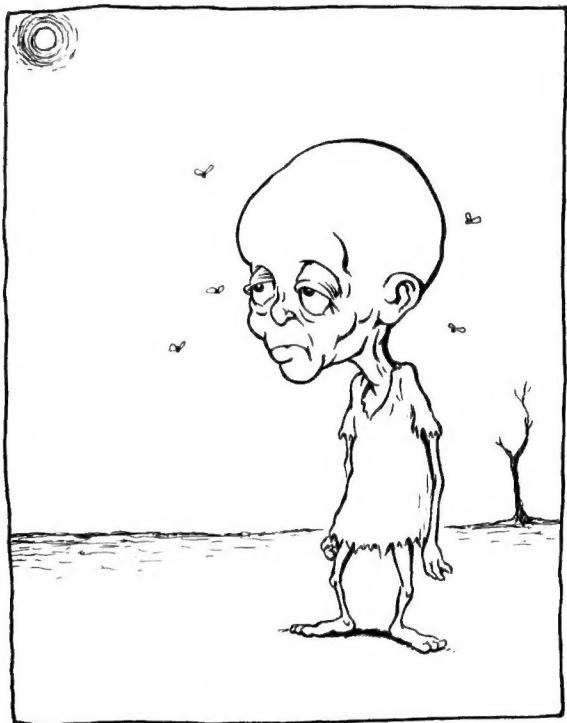
The Metros

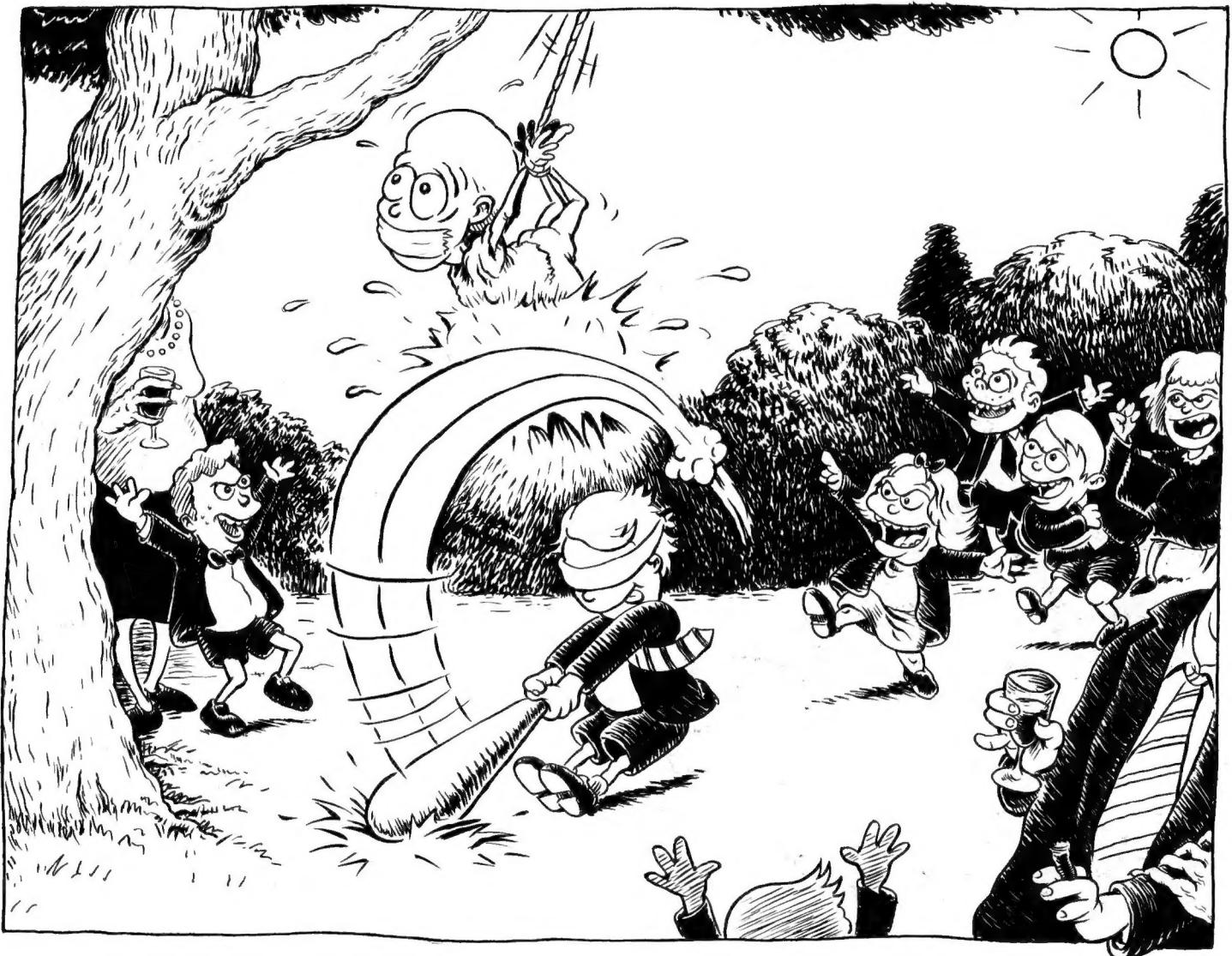
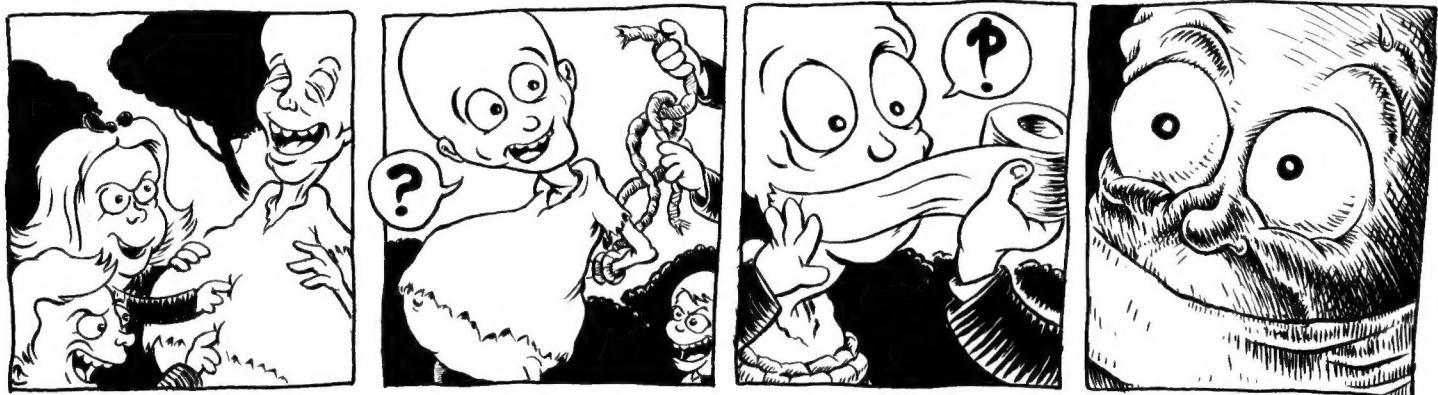
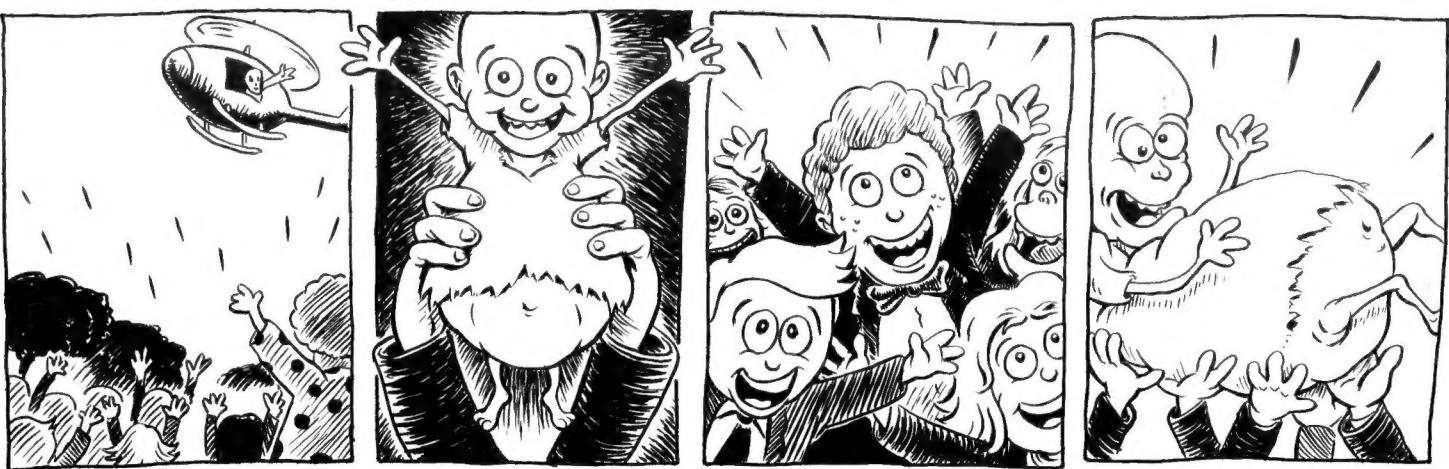
(Rip-Off)

I have BOTH of these fine CD's on ONE side of a C-100 tape, and still have what appears to be another ten minutes or so left over on that side!

The Zodiac Killers, Greg Lowery's latest band (I should say "ex-band," as it appears they've already broken up), continue the progression of his previous combos (in order), Supercharger, Rip-Offs, and Infections, in tearin' the ass outta ya with fast, faster, and faster-still snarlin' punk rock & roll.

Thirteen songs (one an unlisted bonus cut) in about twelve and a half minutes - no waiting! What can he do to top this? Highly recommended. The Metros' self-titled debut runs about twenty-six to seven minutes for their twelve self-penned delights. They could like the very early Humpers - NY Dolls, Thunders, i.e., squealing guitars, noise, chaos . . . not at all offensive!
jo





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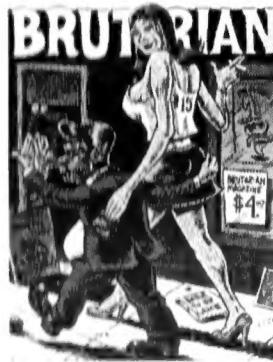
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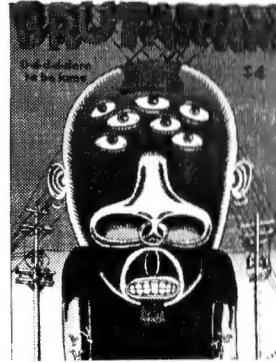
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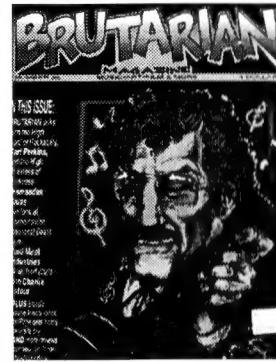
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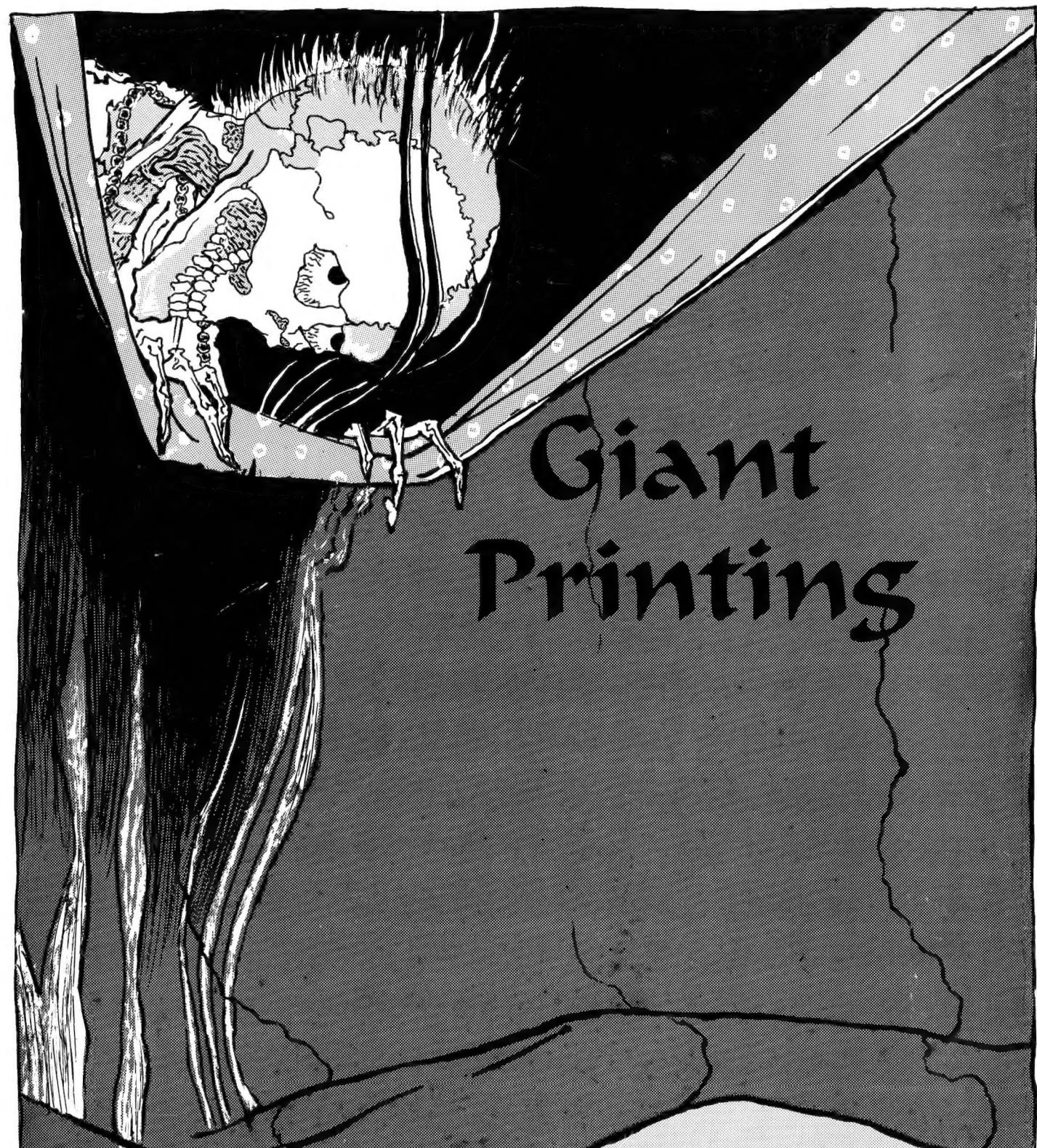


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